



Universität
Zürich ^{UZH}

Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies



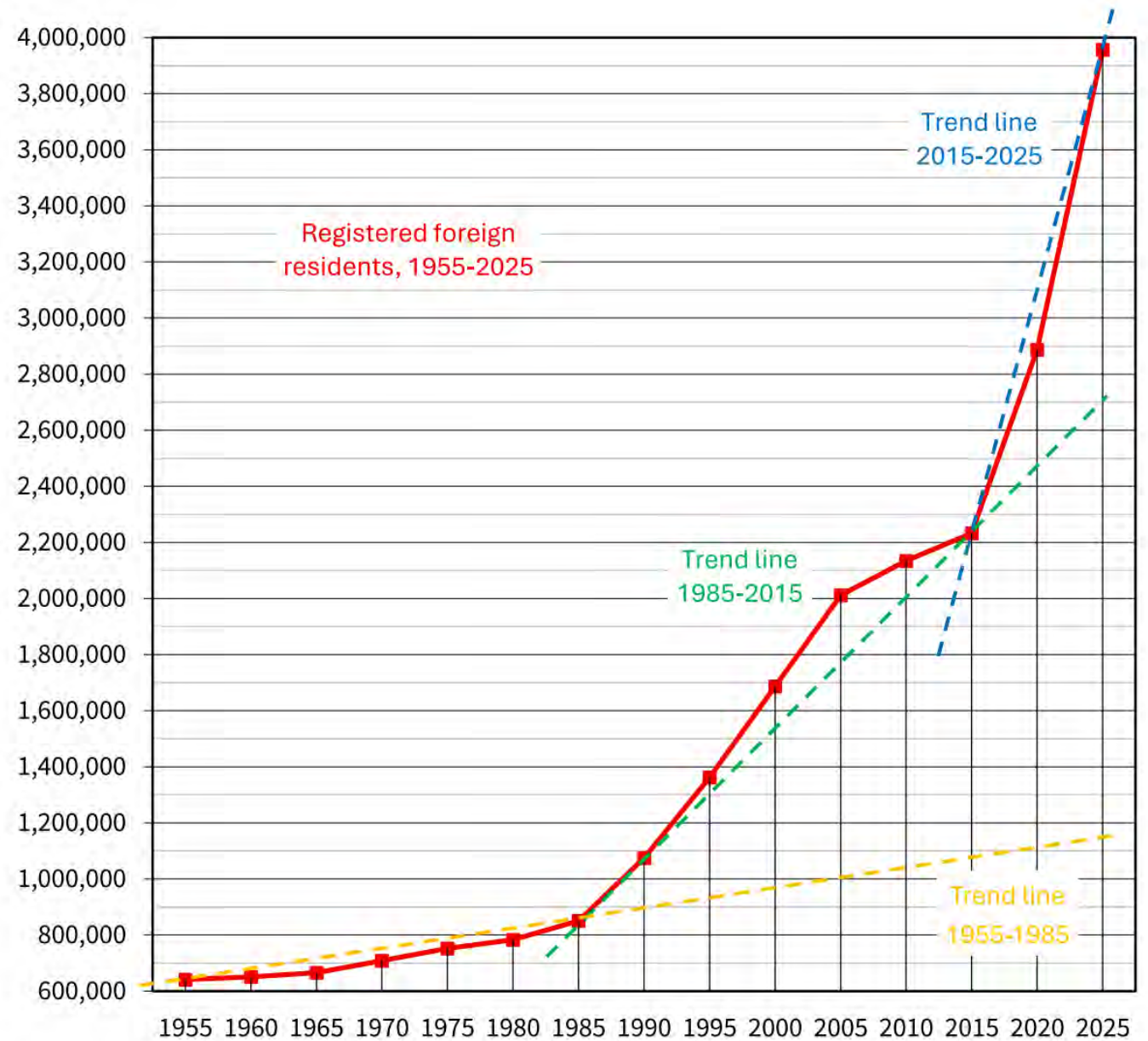
David Chiavacci

Japan as New Immigration State

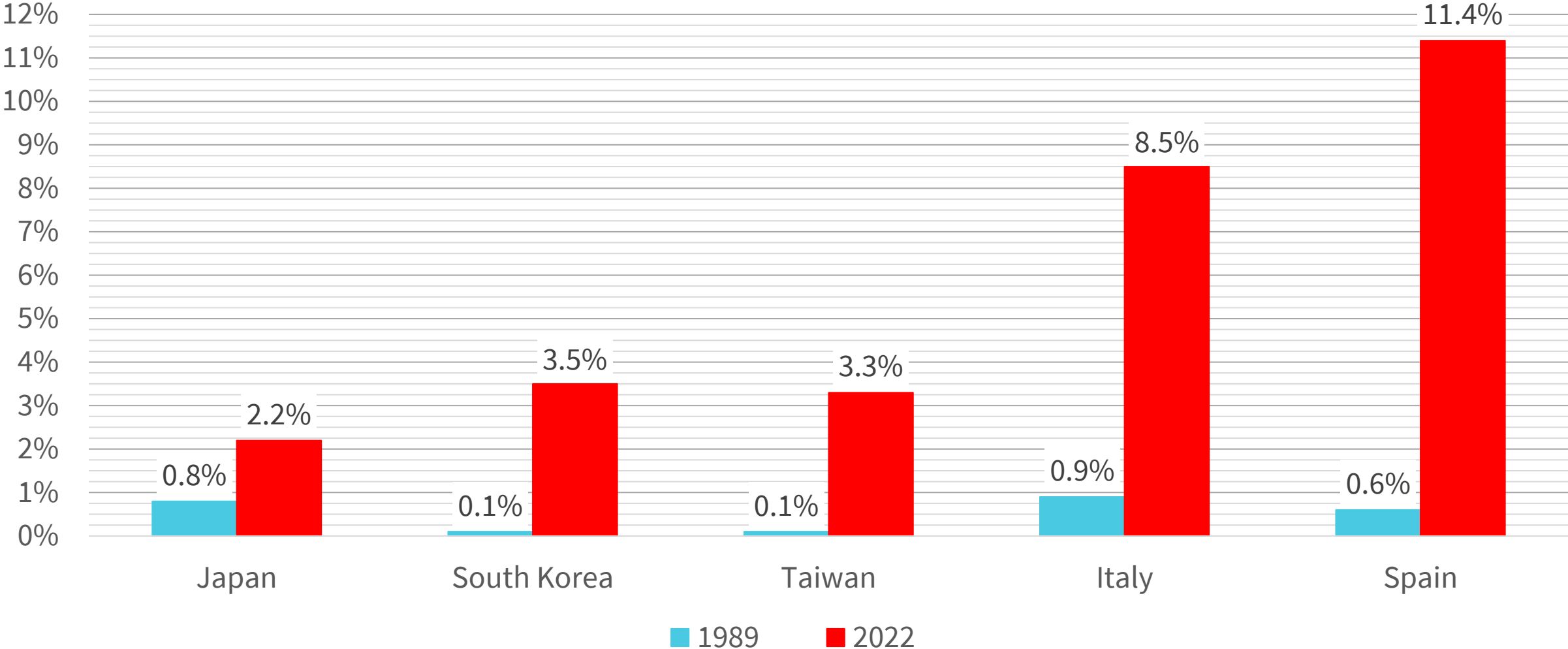
Swiss Tokyo Club, April 3, 2026



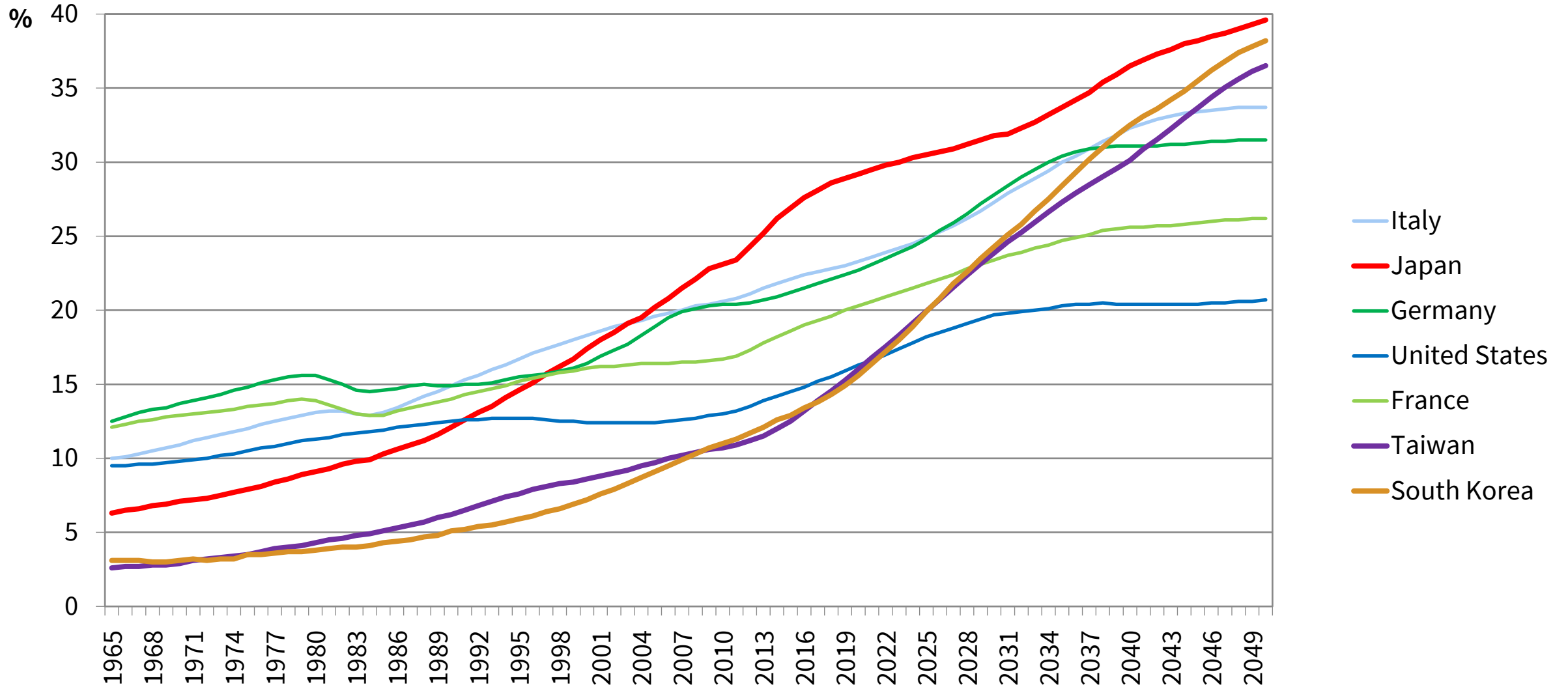
Japan and Immigration: Two Turning-points



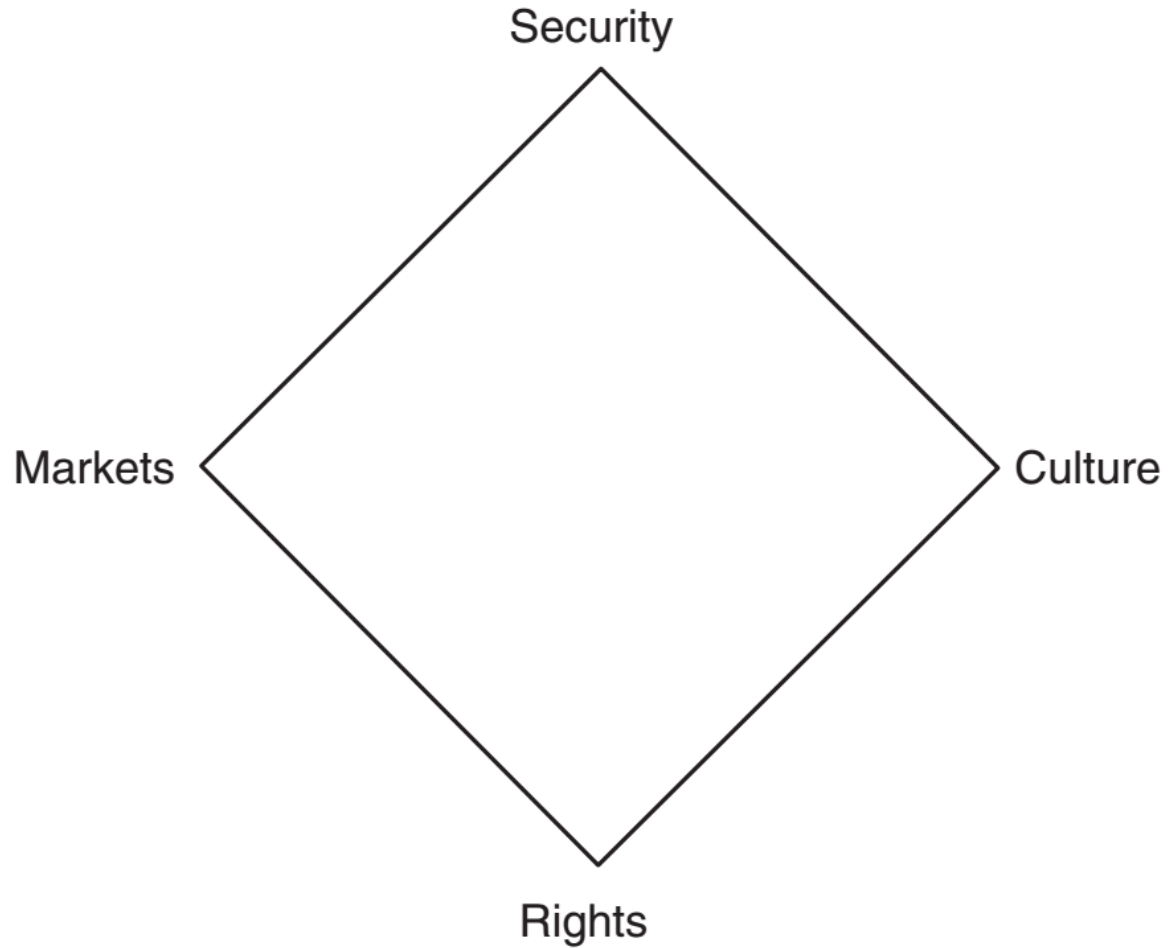
Share of Foreign Population in New Immigration Countries, 1989 and 2022



Share of Population over 65, 1965-2050



Dilemma of Immigration Governance (Hollifield and Foley 2022) and Japan



Japan's four functional imperatives in immigration policy

- Identity frame: ethnic homogeneity
- Growth frame: shared growth
- Security frame: national and public security
- International reputation frame: international standing



Identity and Ethnonationalism



Japan vs. West according to Nihonjinron, 1970s and 1980s (Goodman 2005)

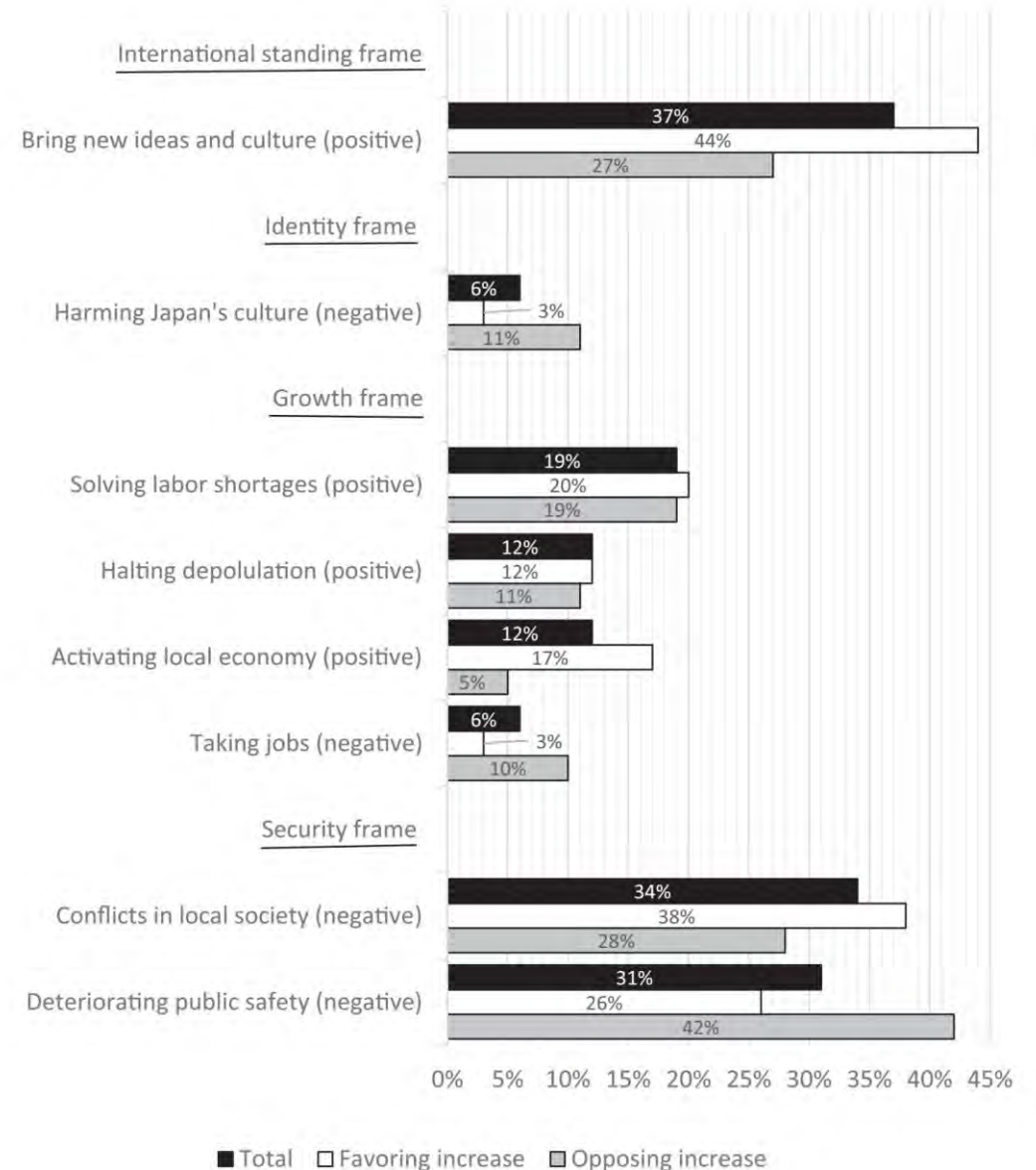
“Western” values

1. RACIAL HETEROGENEITY
(*jinsū no konketsu*)
2. COMPETITIVE CONFLICT
(*meiwaku*)
3. INDIVIDUALISM
(*kojinsugi*)
4. EGALITARIAN, HORIZONTAL TIES
(*yoko*)
5. UNIVERSALISTIC ETHICS
(*kochokuteki genri*)
6. SENSE OF RIGHTS
(*kenri*)
7. LOGICAL/RATIONAL
(*goriteki*)
8. INDEPENDENCE
(*dokuritsu*)
9. CONTRACTUALISM
(*keiyaku*)

“Japanese” values

- RACIAL HOMOGENEITY
(*tan'itsu minzoku*)
- HARMONY
(*wa*)
- GROUPISM
(*shūdansugi*)
- VERTICAL, HIERARCHICAL TIES
(*tate*)
- PARTICULARISTIC ETHICS
(*jōkyō ronri*)
- SENSE OF DUTY
(*gimu*)
- AMBIVALENT/EMOTIONAL
(*kanjōteki*)
- DEPENDENCE
(*amae*)
- “KINTRACTUALISM”
(*en'yaku*)

Expectations and Concerns Regarding Immigration (NHK 2019)





International Reputation

Chong Seok Park vs. Hitachi (1970-1974)



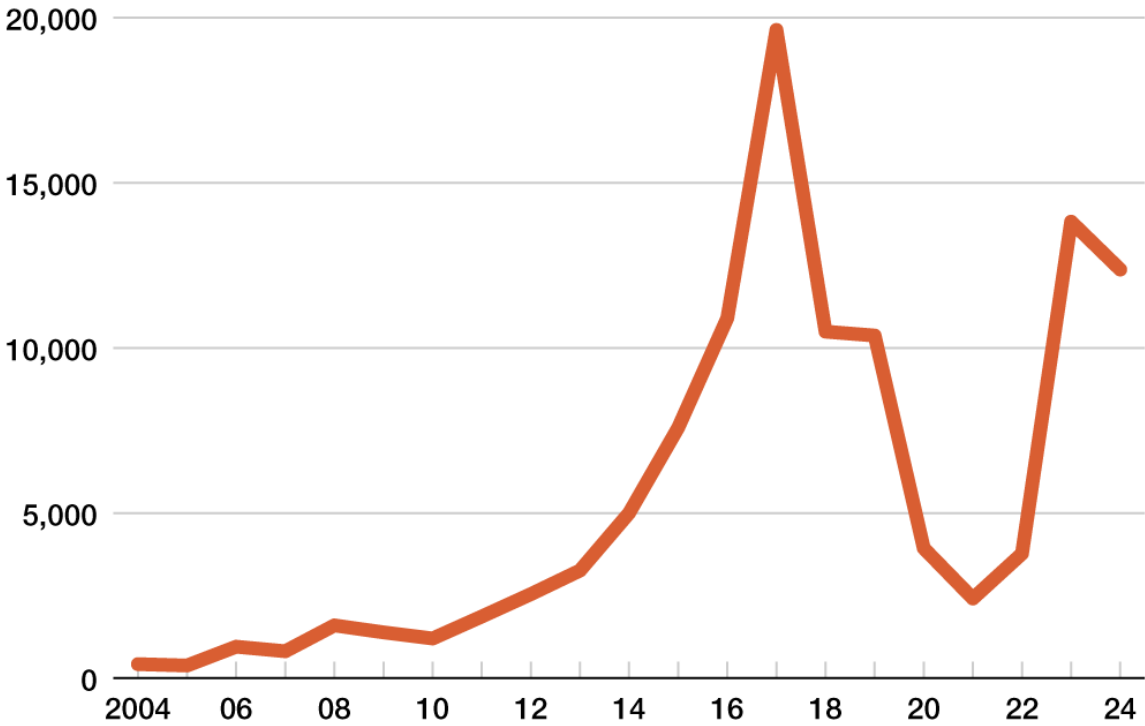
🔑 日立就職差別裁判

在日韓国人であることなどを理由に採用を取り消されたとして、当時19歳の朴鐘碩さんが1970年12月8日、日立製作所を相手取り横浜地裁に提訴。地裁は74年6月、朴さん側の「在日朝鮮人が置かれている歴史的社会的背景を考えると、(採用試験で) 出生以来使っていた日本名を使用したからといって企業が解雇する理由にならない」との主張を全面的に認め、日立側の採用取り消しを認めないとする判決を言い渡した。

Internationalization of Japan

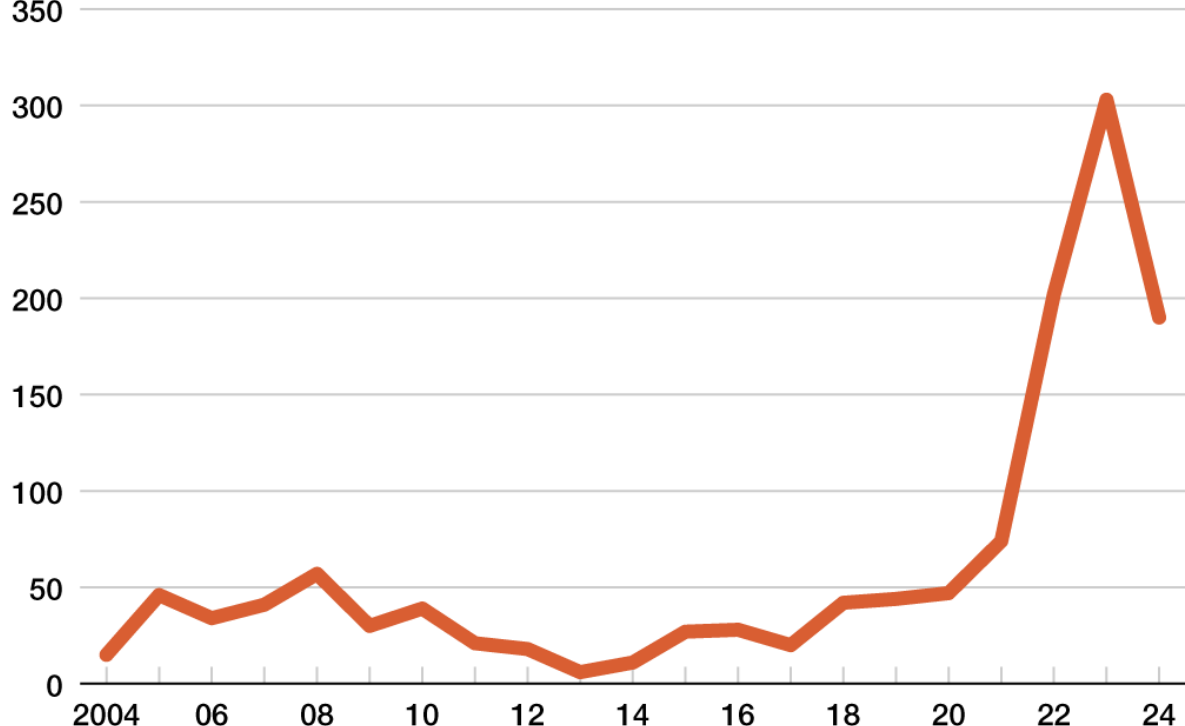


Refugee Applications



vs.

Refugee Acceptance



Japan's Dual Refugee Policy



外務省
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
of JAPAN

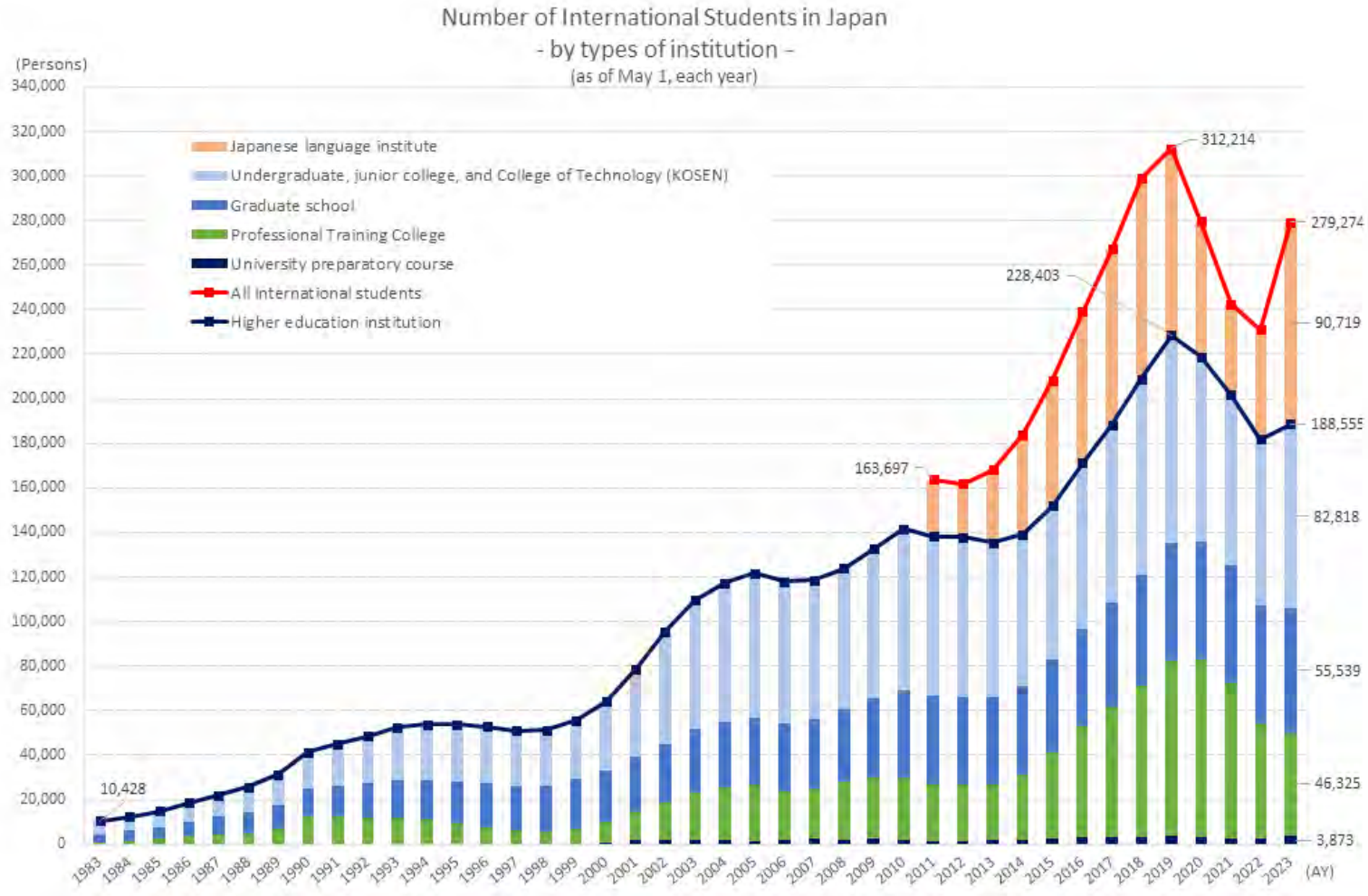


Sadako Ogata
UN High Commissioner for Refugees (1990-2000)

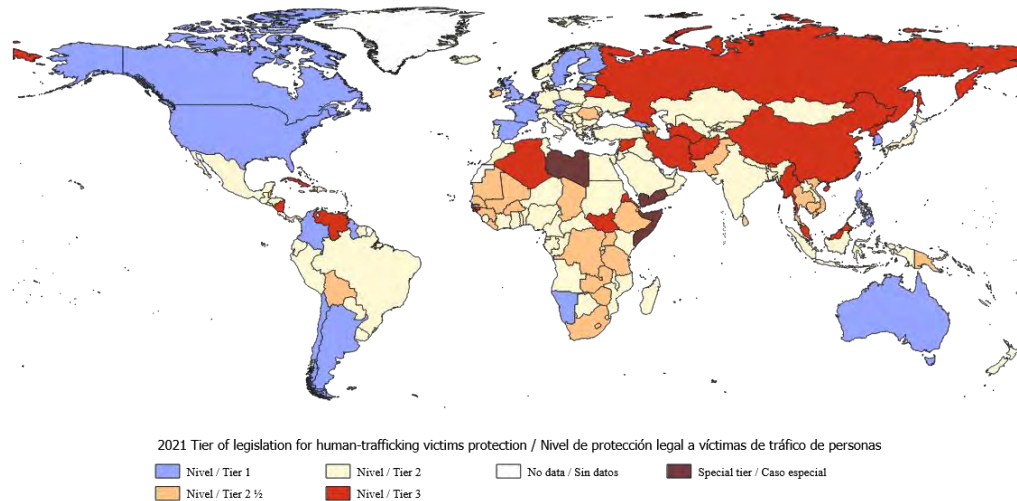


法務省
MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

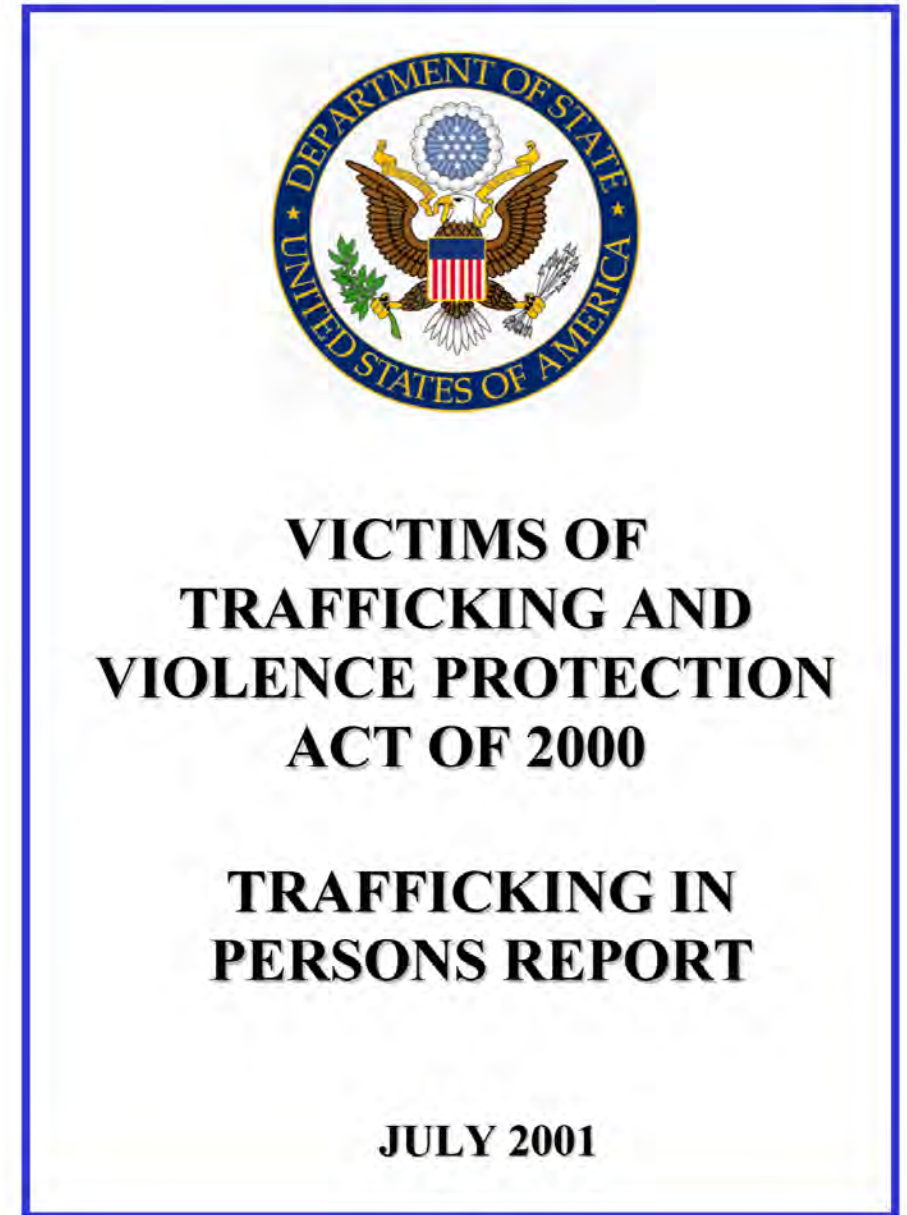
Internationalization and Plan of 100,000 Foreign Students (1983)



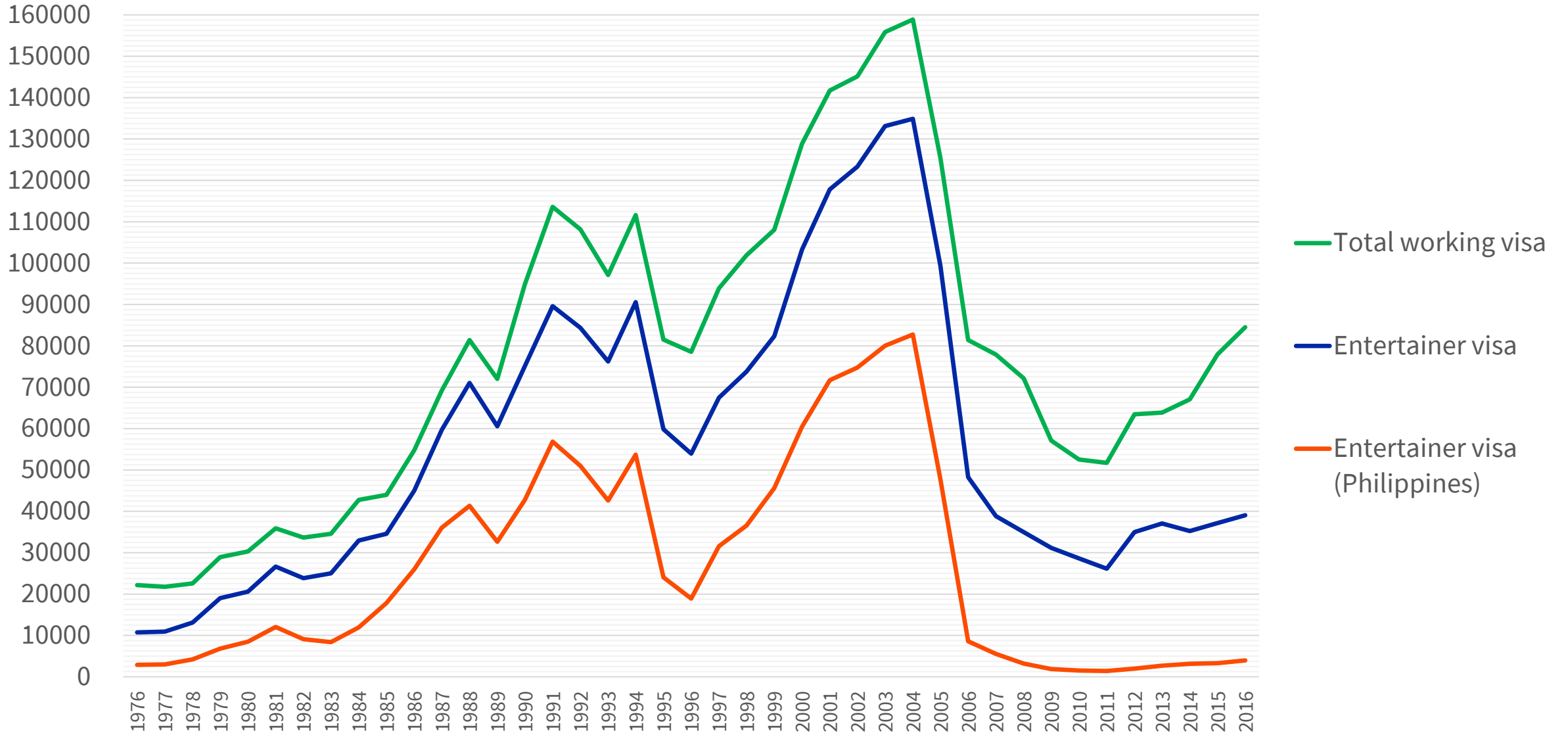
Human Trafficking and Entertainer Visa, Mid-2000s



“Regarding human trafficking, I have received various reports, and I have also attended the second meeting of the related inter-ministerial liaison commission in July of this year and have asked the involved ministries and agencies for aggressive efforts. Even among embassies in Tokyo this has become a huge topic. In other words, it is extremely embarrassing for Japan, and must be corrected, absolutely. There are victims, first and foremost women, and many cases are emerging. We, in the government, have to work aggressively so as not to have these kinds of cases.”
(Hiroyuki Hosoda, Chief Secretary of State, 2004)



Foreign People Entering with Working Visa, 1976-2016

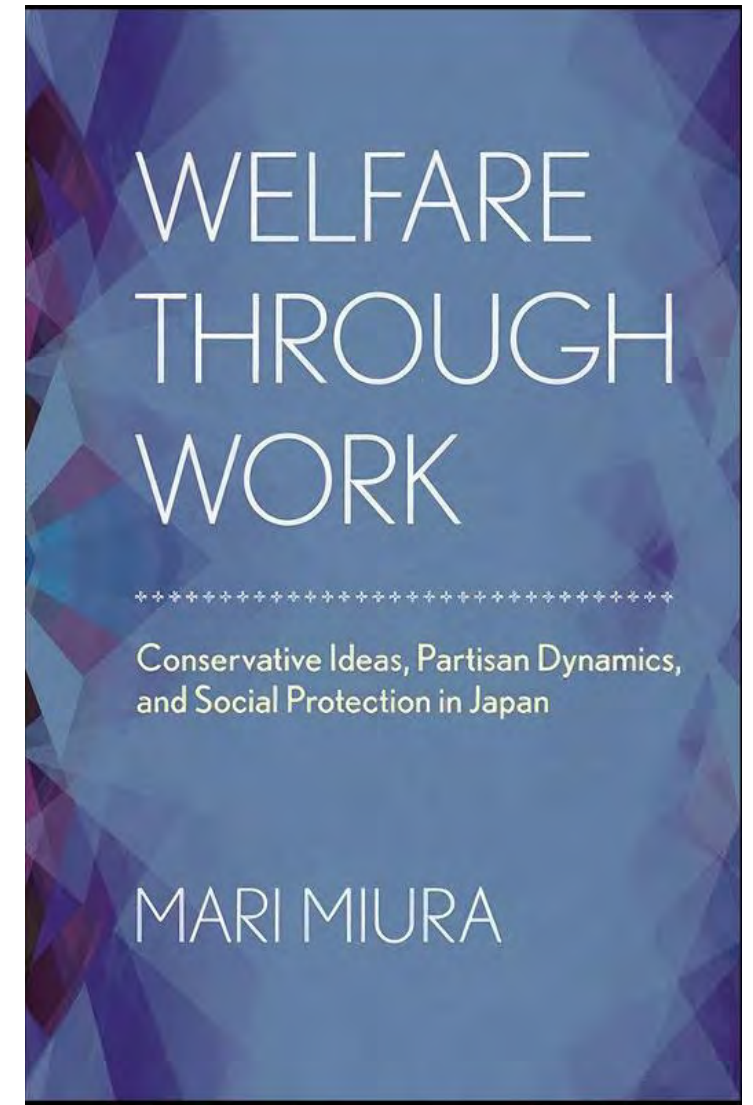




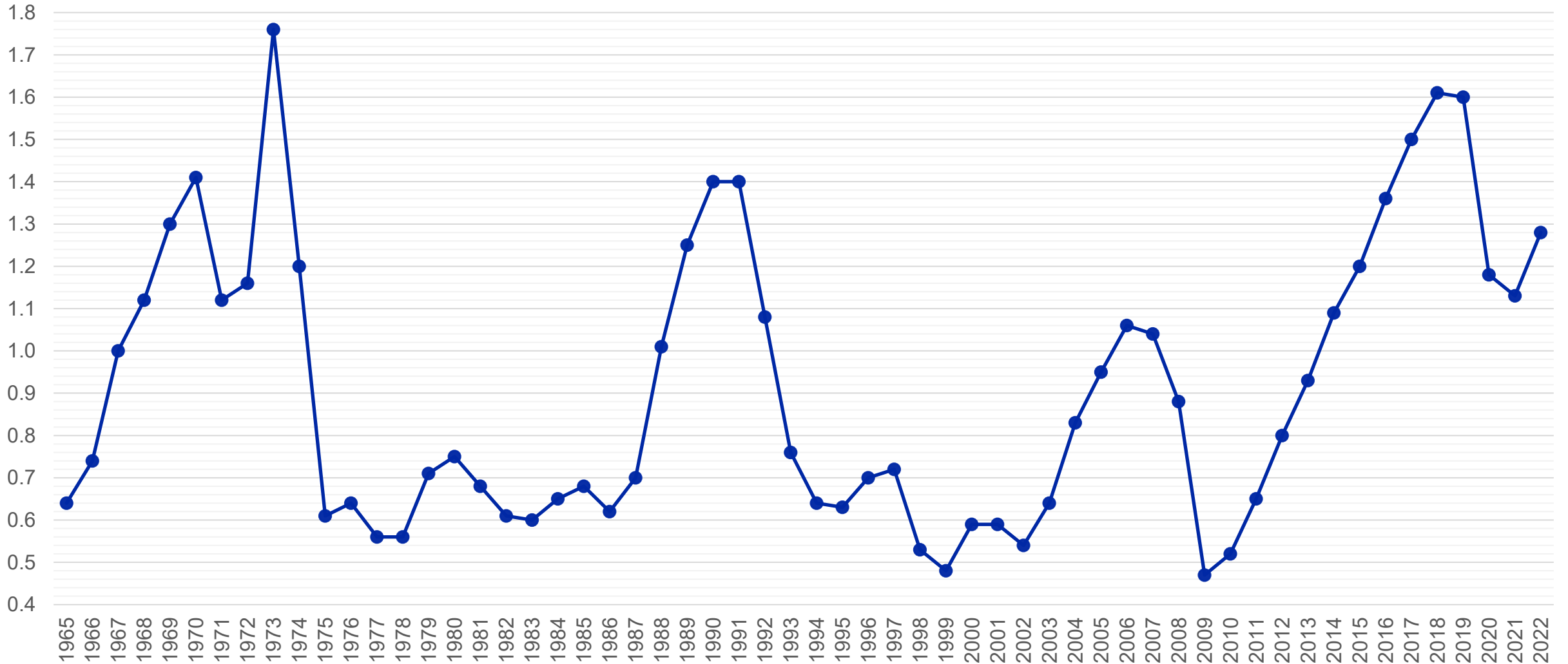
Developmentalism and Shared Growth



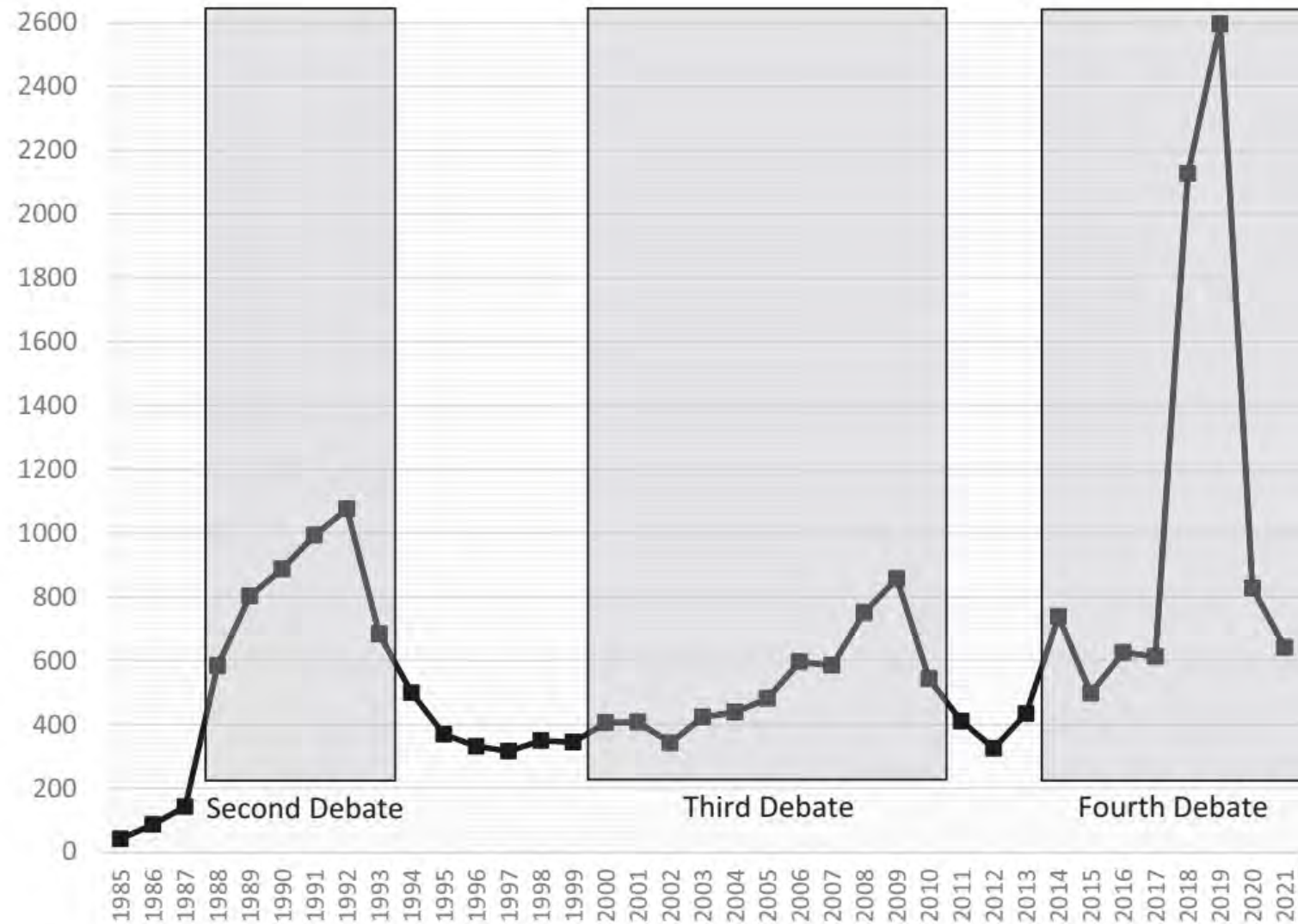
Japan's Social Contract of Shared Growth



Job Openings-to-applicant Ratio in Japan, 1965-2022



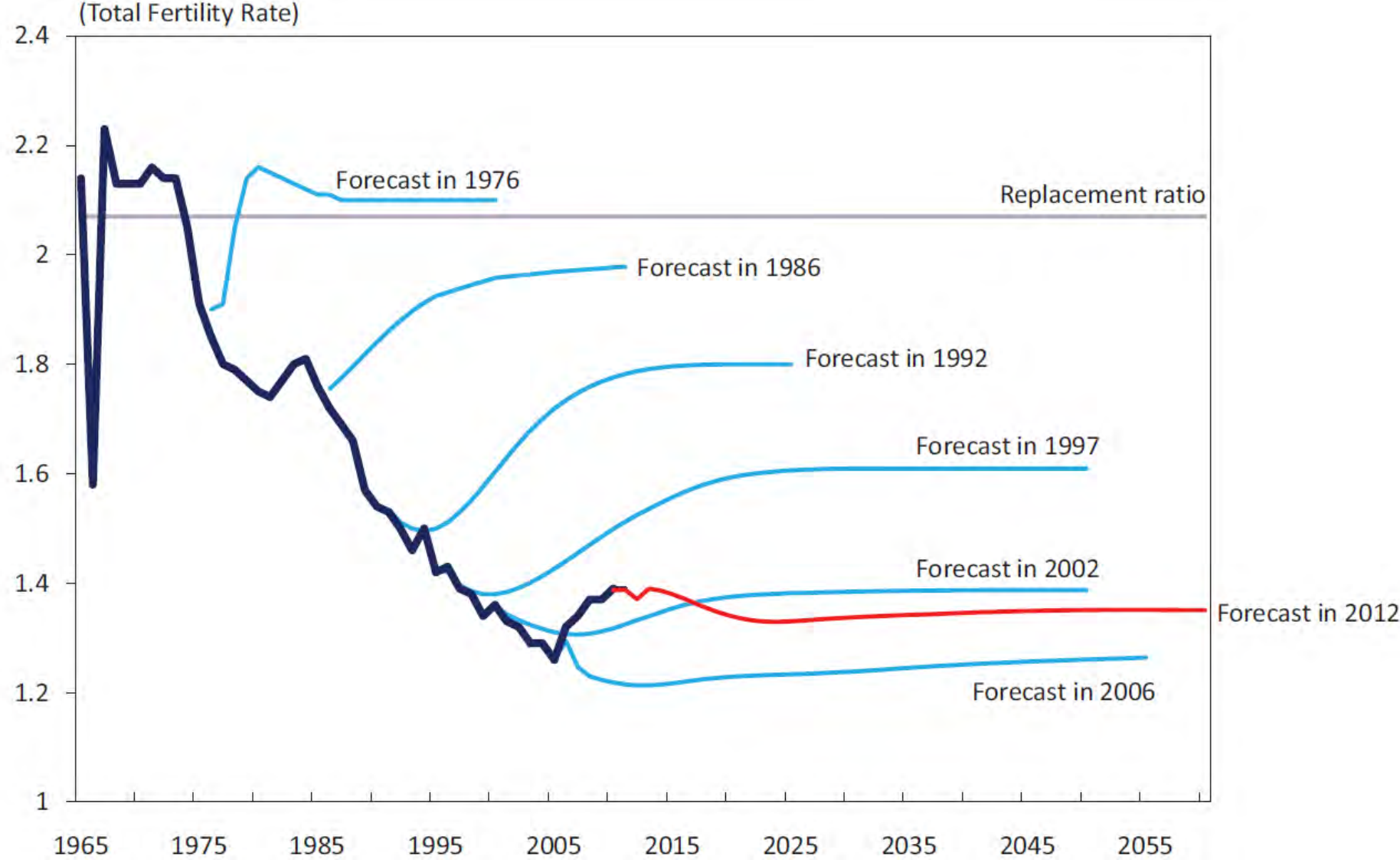
Salience of Immigration in Public Debate, 1985-2021



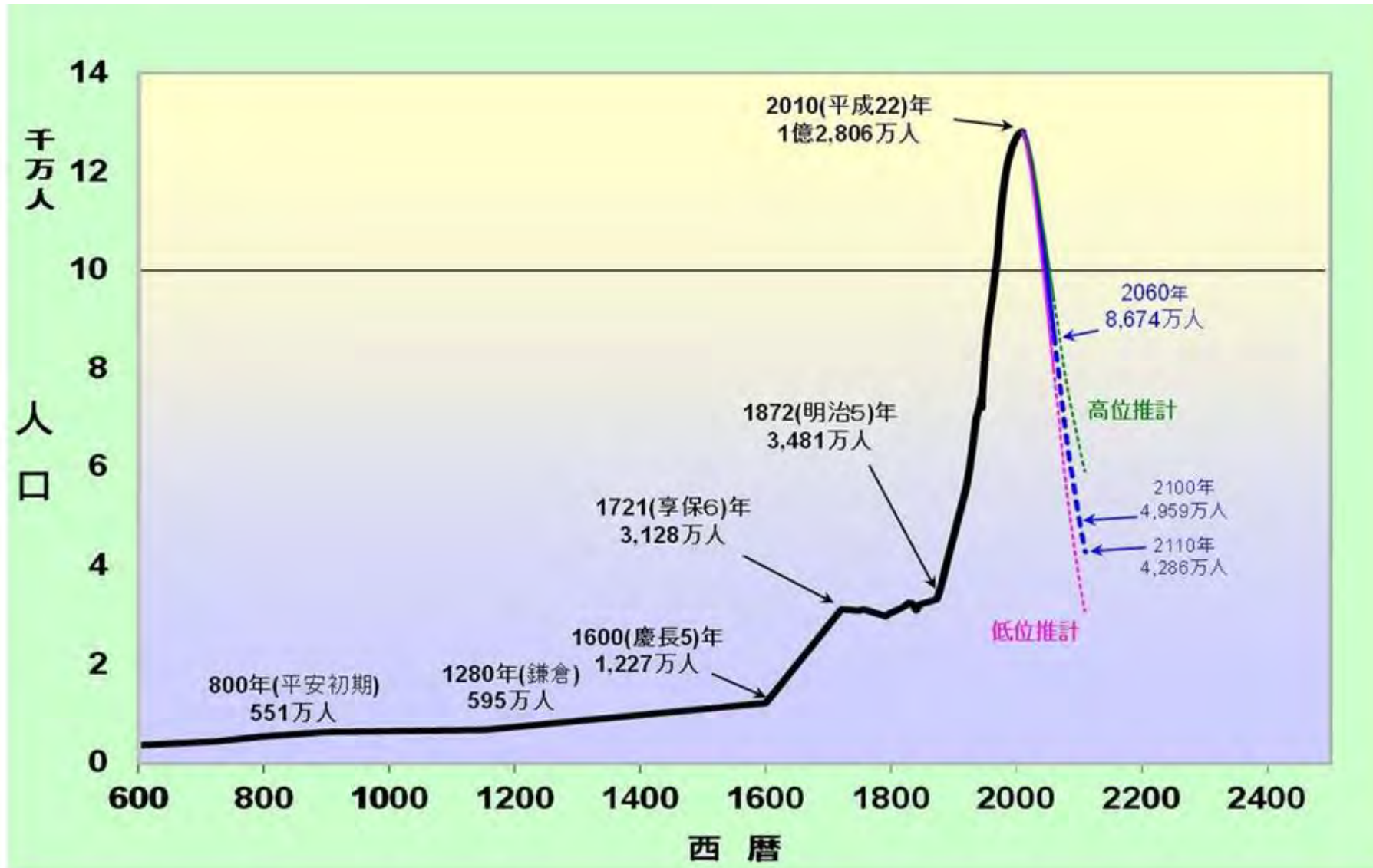
Substantial Reform Proposals in Immigration Policy, 1984-2018

<i>Period</i>	<i>Proposals</i>	<i>Proposals per year</i>
1984-1988	5	1.0
1989-1993	11	2.2
1994-1998	1	0.2
1999-2003	19	3.8
2004-2008	34	6.4
2009-2013	8	1.6
2014-2018	21	4.2

Forecasts of Japan's Total Fertility Rate, 1976-2012



Population Development in Japan, 600-2100



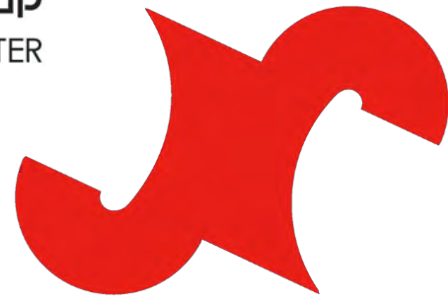
Population Models of Japan, 2000-2050 (UN 2000)

	<i>Number of immigrants per year</i>	<i>Total number of immigrants, 2050</i>	<i>Total population, 2050</i>
Without immigration	—	—	104,921,000
Total population constant	343,000	17,141,000	127,457,000
Working population constant	647,000	32,332,000	150,697,000
Dependency rate above 3.0	1,897,000	94,837,000	229,021,000
Dependency rate constant	10,471,000	523,543,000	817,965,000

The First (Small) Immigration Debate: Guestworkers vs. Forced Labor



日本生産性本部
JAPAN PRODUCTIVITY CENTER



日本商工会議所
The Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry



連合



Japan's Gap: Official Dual Immigration Policy vs. Open Side Doors

Japan's official, dual immigration policy (MOJ 1988)

- “Enlargement of acceptance of highly qualified Foreign Workers” vs. “Problem of acceptance of simple workers”
- Foundation of Japan's immigration law and policy, but de facto about 80% non-highly qualified foreign workers

Examples of points awarded

Advanced specialized/technical activities		
Academic background	Holder of a doctor's degree	30
	Holder of a master's degree	20
Professional career (Business experience)	10 years or more	20
	7 years or more	15
Age	Up to 29 years of age	15
	Between 30 and 34 years of age	10
Bonus point	Holder of a Japanese work-related qualification	10
	Person who has earned a degree at a higher education institution in Japan	10
	Person who has passed Level N1 of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test or has been approved through another test as having equivalent or higher language proficiency, or the person who majored in Japanese language at a foreign university and graduated from the university.	15

Points-Based Preferential Immigration Treatment for Highly-Skilled Foreign Professionals

Under the points-based system, foreign nationals recognized as “highly-skilled foreign professionals” will be given preferential immigration treatment!



The Three Categories of Activities of Highly-Skilled Foreign Professionals

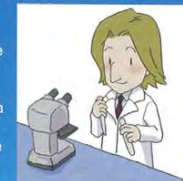
Advanced academic research activities
[Highly Skilled Professional(i)(a)]

Activities of engaging in research, research guidance or education based on a contract entered into with a public or private organization in Japan.



Advanced specialized/ technical activities
[Highly Skilled Professional(i)(b)]

Activities of engaging in work requiring specialized knowledge or skills in the field of natural sciences or humanities based on a contract entered into with a public or private organization in Japan.



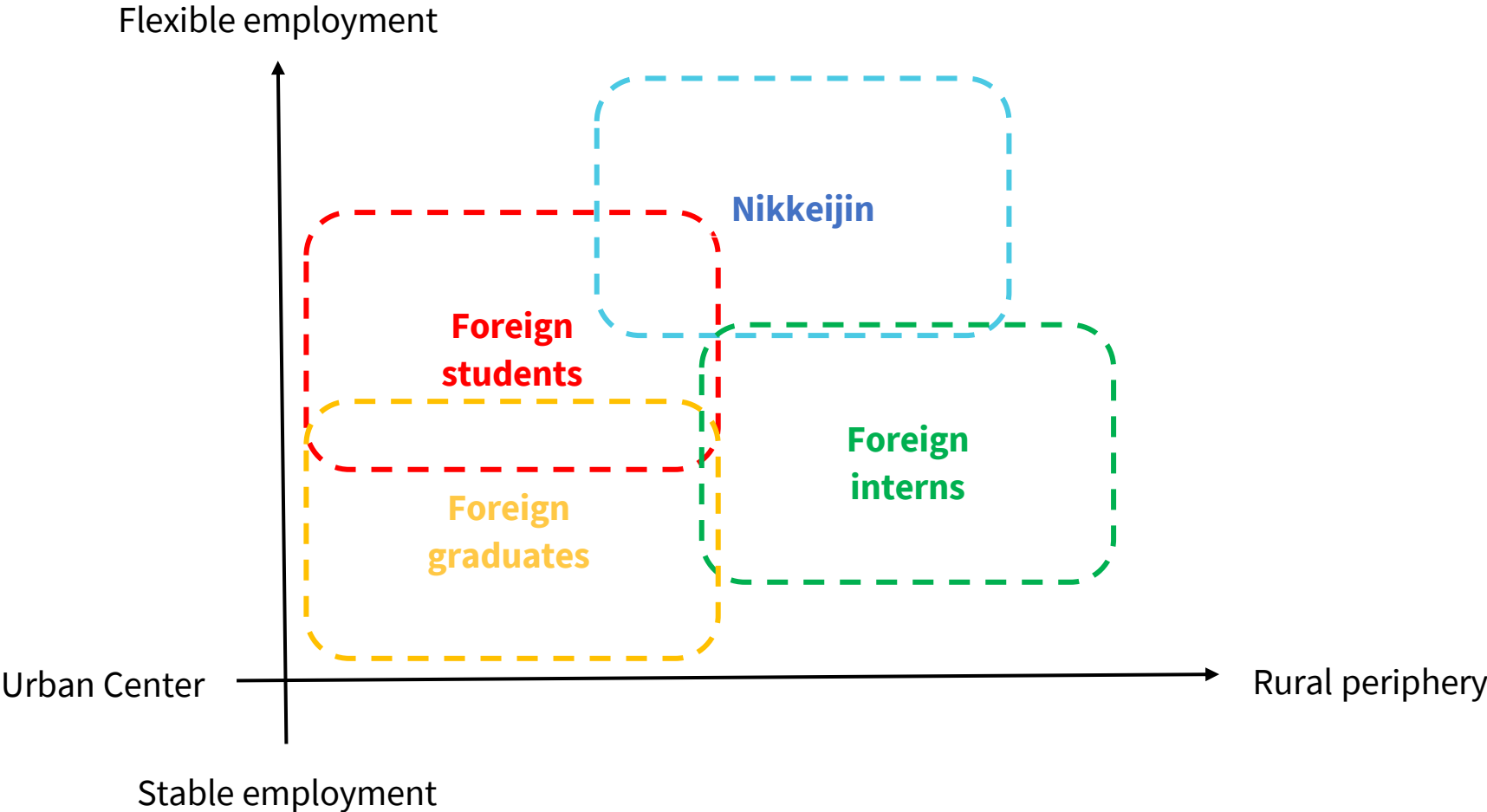
Advanced business management activities
[Highly Skilled Professional(i)(c)]

Activities of engaging in the operation or management of a public or private organization in Japan.



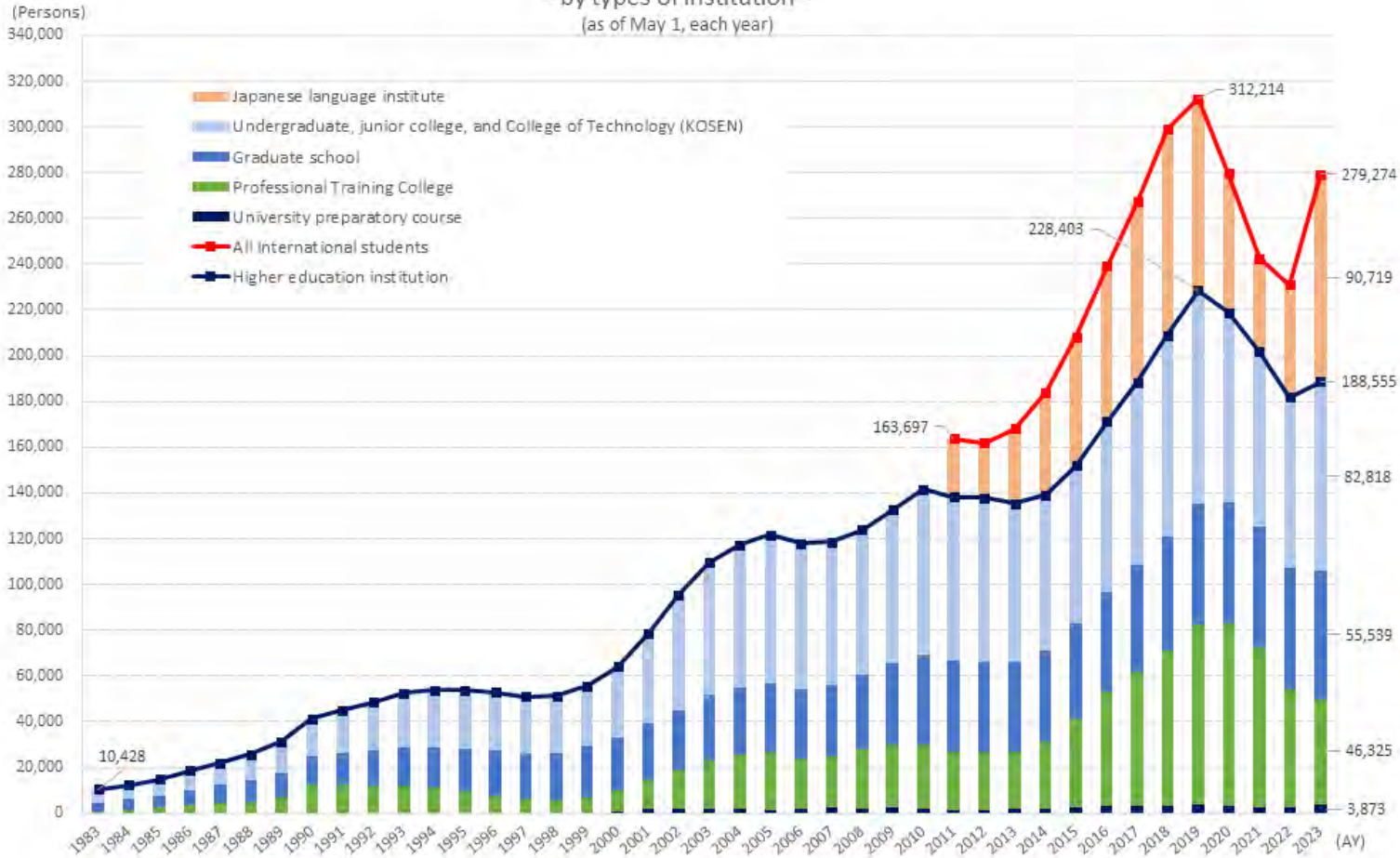
For further details, please turn to the Points Calculation Table overleaf

Labor Market Position by Flexibility and Geography



Foreign Students

Number of International Students in Japan
- by types of institution -
(as of May 1, each year)



Ⅲ.2033年までの目標

外国人留学生の受入れ・定着



2033年までに**40万人**
(コロナ前31.8万人)

留学生30万人計画の受入れ増加ペースの維持

< 大学・専門学校・
日本語学校等 >

○外国人留学生の数
31.2万人→**38万人**

○全学生数に占める留学生の
割合 学部：3%→5%
修士：19%→20%
博士：21%→33%

< 高校等 >

○外国人留学生の数（高校）
0.6万人→**2万人**

○全生徒数に占める留学生の
割合
高校：0.2%→0.7%

○留学生の卒業後の国内就職
率（国内進学者を除く。）
48%→60%

Upward Mobility and Transnational Opportunities of Chinese Students

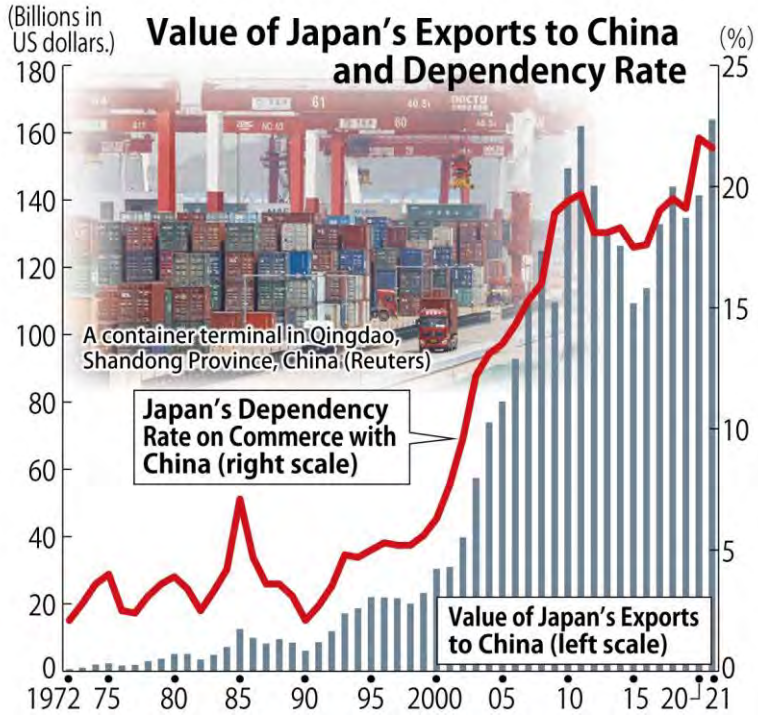
Successful socio-economic stabilization

- Student (and atypical employee) => highly qualified worker (in SME) => entrepreneur (over 10% business owner)
- Transnationalism of crucial importance for occupational niche and transnational entrepreneurship

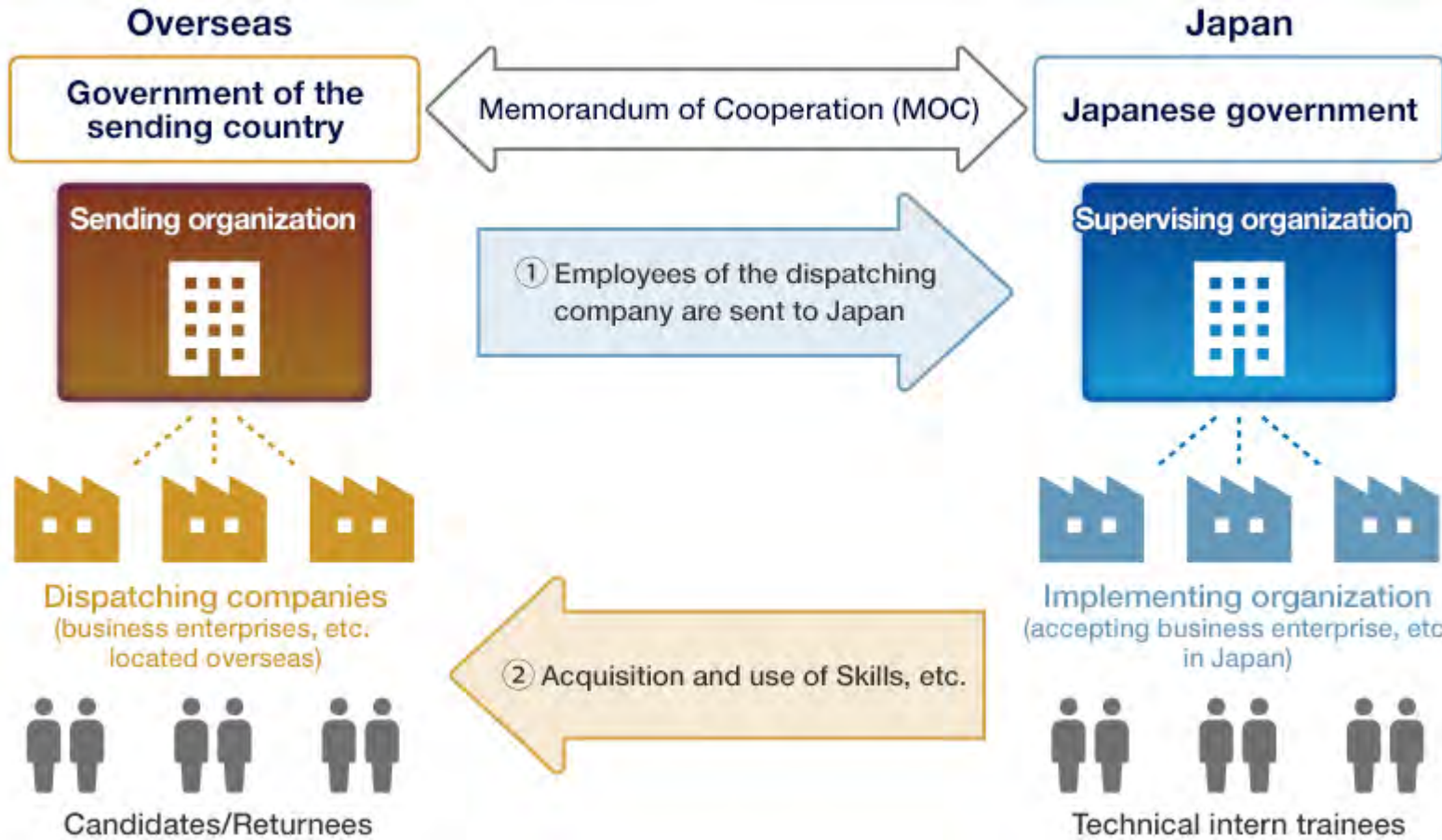
コンビニ名	全国の従業員総数	うち外国人	比率
 セブン-イレブン	約39万人	約3万1000人	約7.9%
 ファミリーマート	約20万人	約1万人	約5%
 ローソン	約19万人	約1万1000人	約5.8%
 ミニストップ	約3万4000人	約3300人	約9.7%

※18年8月末時点。
ミニストップは同月時点

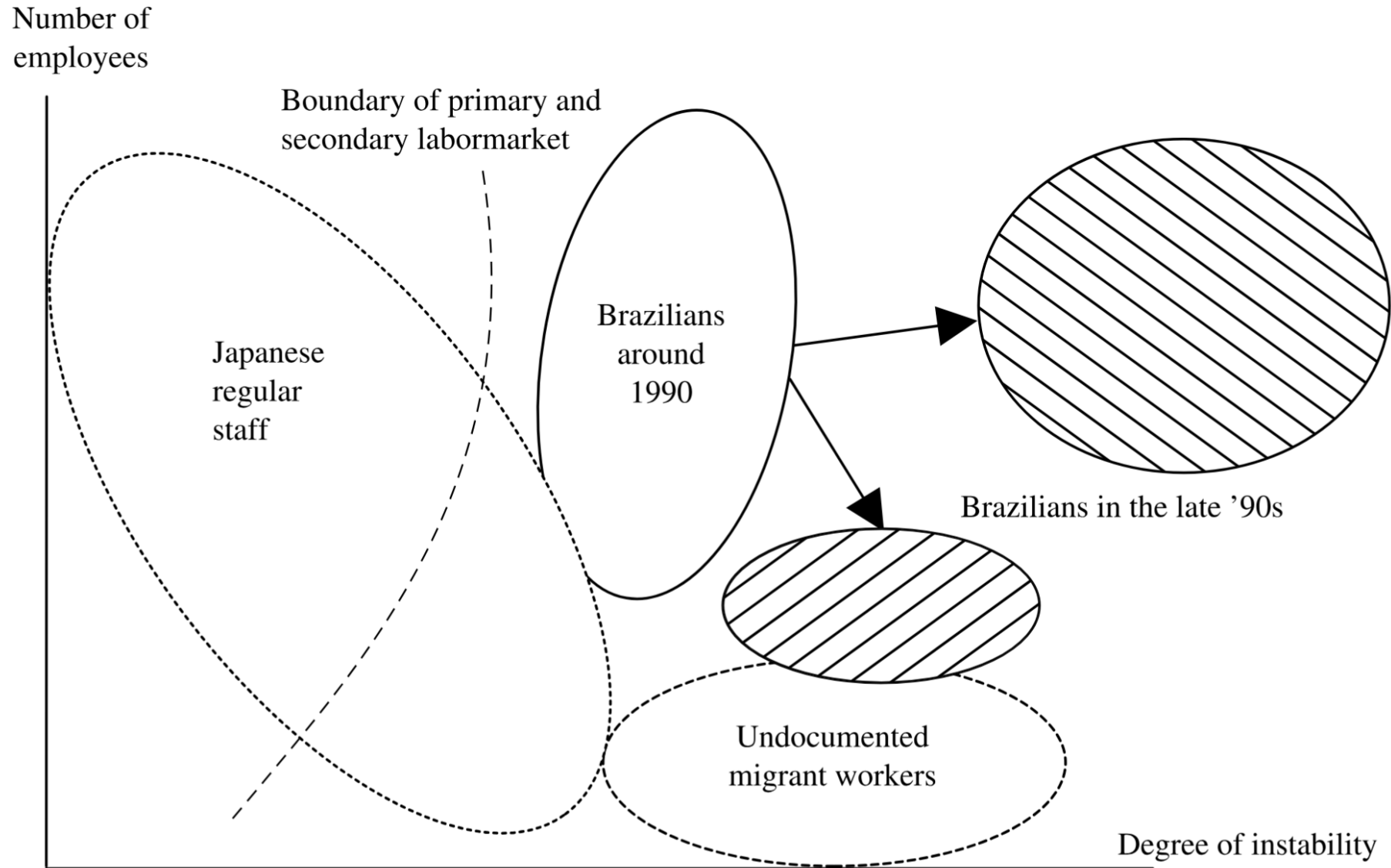
合計約5万5300人



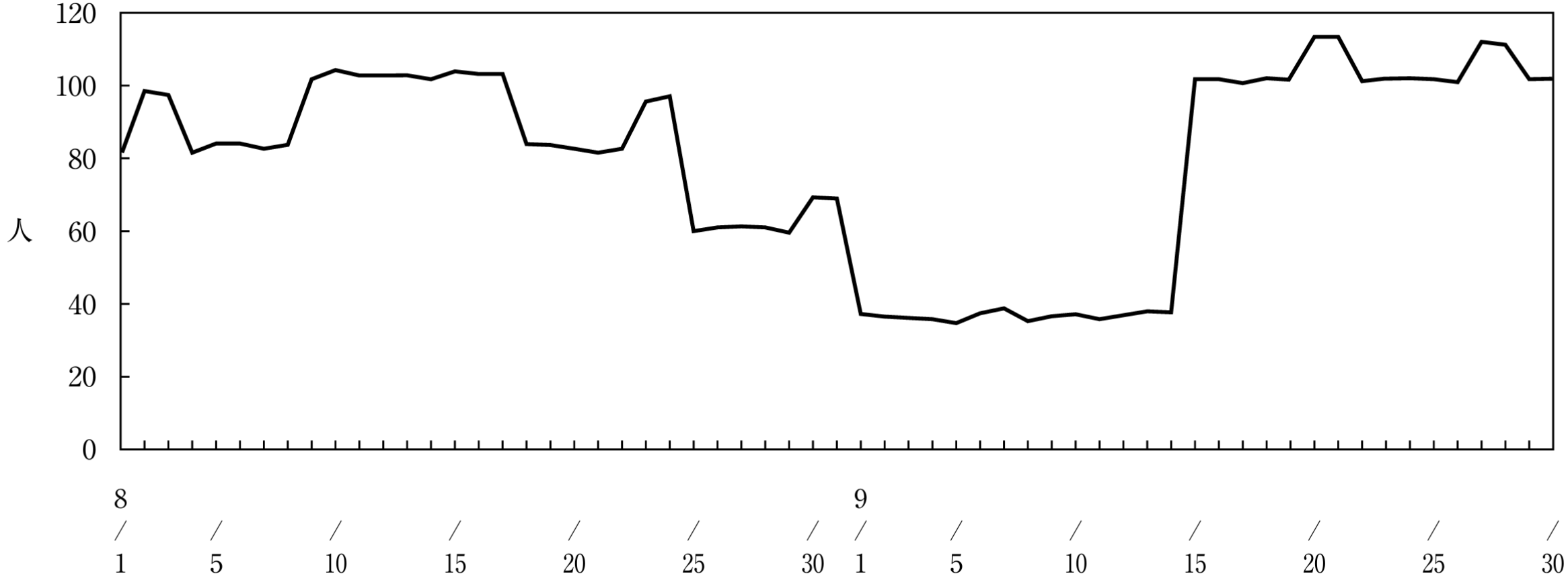
Foreign Intern System as Transnational Total Institution



Changing Positions of Nikkeijin in the Labor Market



Number of Nikkeijin in One Factory, August-September 2003



Non-enrollment of Nikkeijin Children according to Local Surveys, Early 2000s

	School age foreign resident	The number of school attendance	The enrollment in foreign school	The number of school non-attendance	Rate of school non-attendance
Ota City, Gunma	502	233	91	178	35.5%
Oizumi Town, Gunma	646	313	109	224	34.7%
Iida City, Nagano	195	149	0	46	23.6%
Hamamatsu City, Shizuoka	1,556	873	358	325	20.9%
Iwata City, Shizuoka	270	118	91	61	22.6%
Kosai City, Shizuoka	169	116	unknown	58	34.3%
Fuji City, Shizuoka	274	191	0	83	30.3%
Toyohashi City, Aichi	1,100	644	250	206	18.7%
Toyota City, Aichi	819	431	236	75	9.1%
Ogaki City, Gifu	364	212	unknown	152	41.8%
Kani City, Gifu	258	91	74	93	36.0%
Minokamo City, Gifu	238	110	74	54	22.7%
Yokkaichi City, Mie	461	274	109	78	16.9%
Suzuka City, Mie	497	167	50	280	56.3%
Total	7,349	3,922	1,442	1,913	26.0%

Three Reform Proposals (Third Debate, mid-2000s)

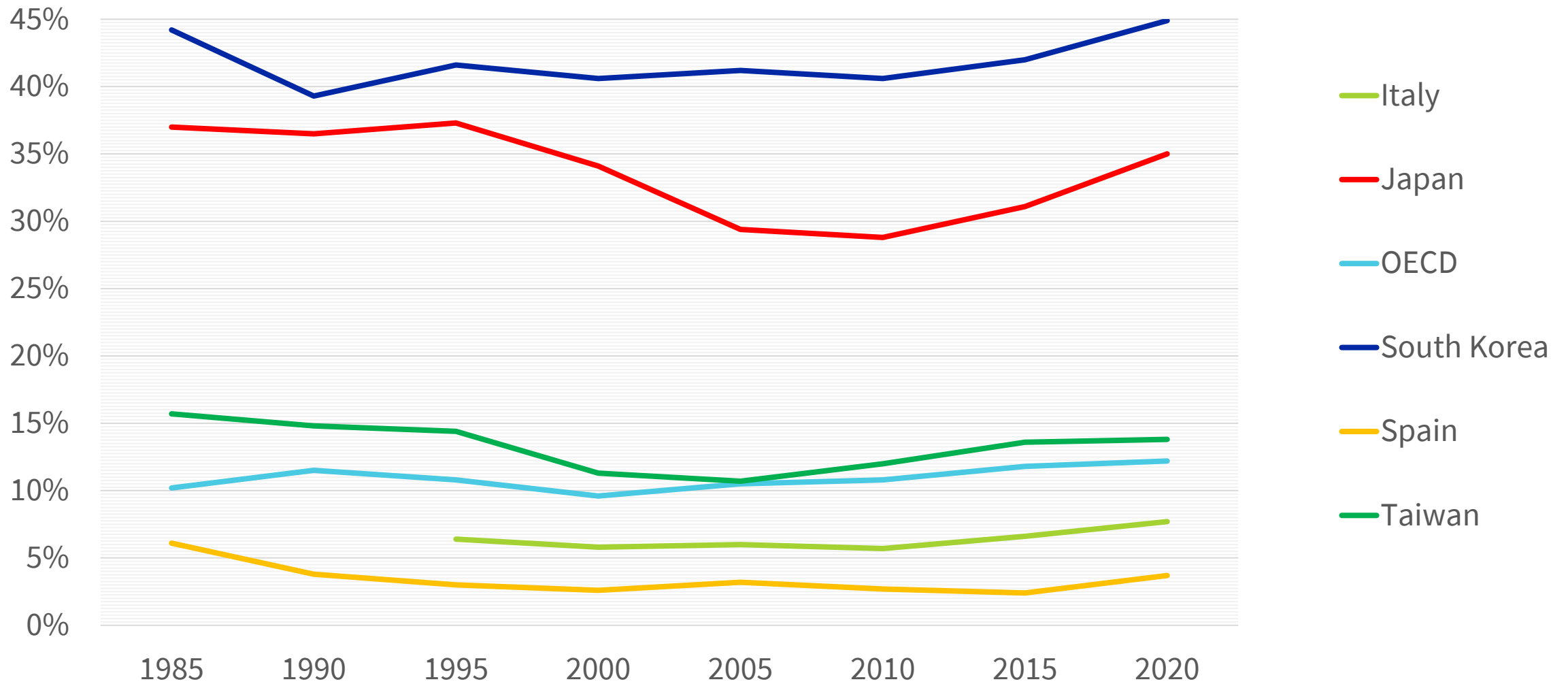
- Justice Vice-Minister Tarō Konō (2006)
 - Ending exceptional rule for Nikkeijin and part of trainee programs
 - New middle categories for qualified foreign workers
 - Long-term acceptance of foreign workers and their families
- Justice Minister Jin'en Nagase (2007)
 - Japan as immigration state: guest worker programs (even for low skilled foreign workers)
- Study group of about 80 LDP parliamentarians under Hidenao Nakagawa and Hidenori Sakanaka (2008)
 - Japan as immigration nation: acceptance of 10 million long-term immigrants in the next 50 years



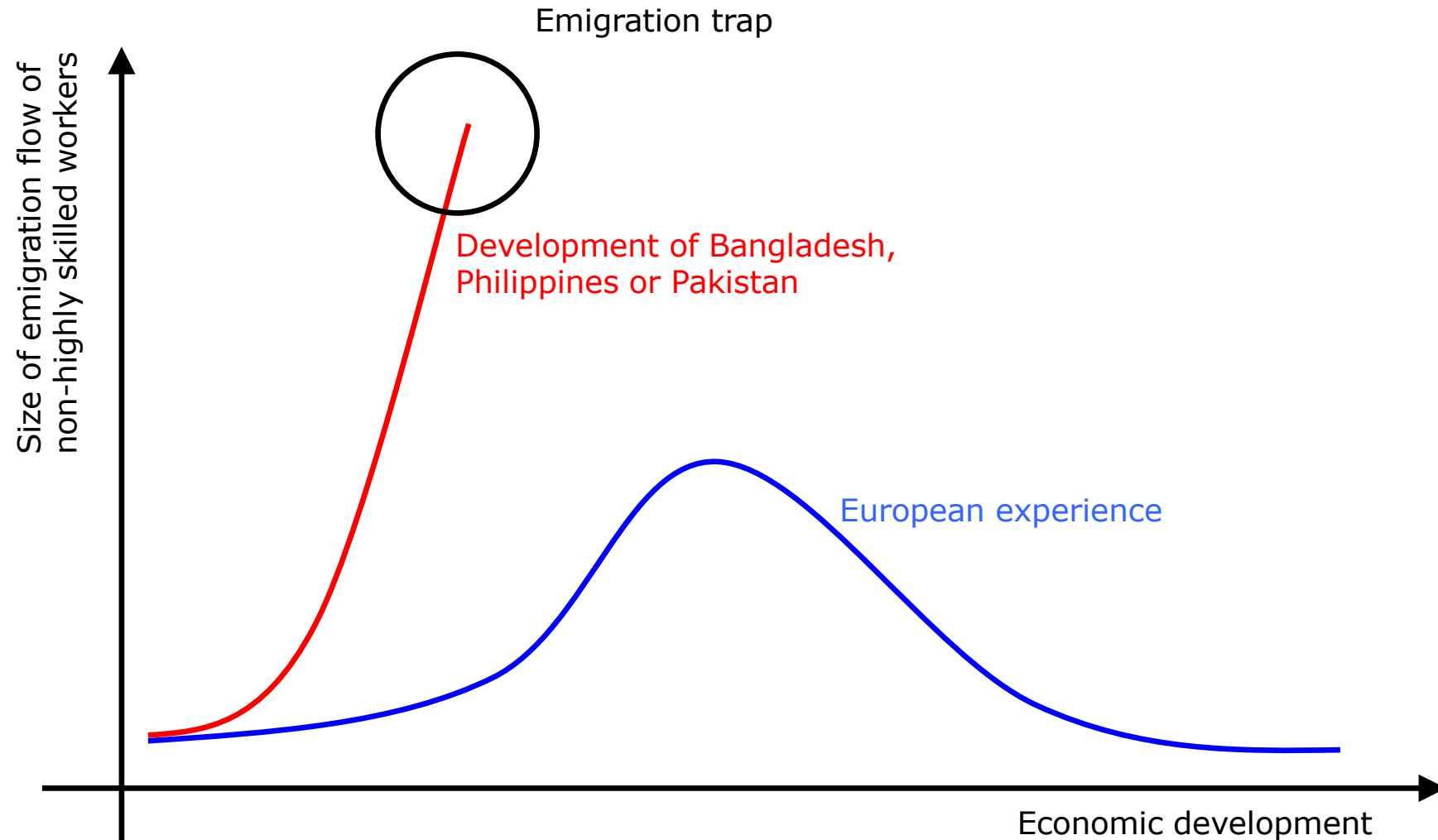
Social Indicators of Elderly Population (over 65), 2020

	Average net pension replacement	Relative income poverty rate	Income inequality (Gini)	Income share from work
France	71.9%	4.4%	0.275	6.9%
Germany	55.3%	11.0%	0.270	18.1%
Italy	73.2%	10.3%	0.323	19.9%
Japan	38.8%	20.0%	0.339	40.3%
OECD	61.4%	14.2%	0.306	25.5%
South Korea	35.8%	40.4%	0.376	48.6%
Spain	86.5%	11.3%	0.310	19.5%
UK	54.4%	13.1%	0.319	14.2%
US	50.5%	22.8%	0.409	31.9%

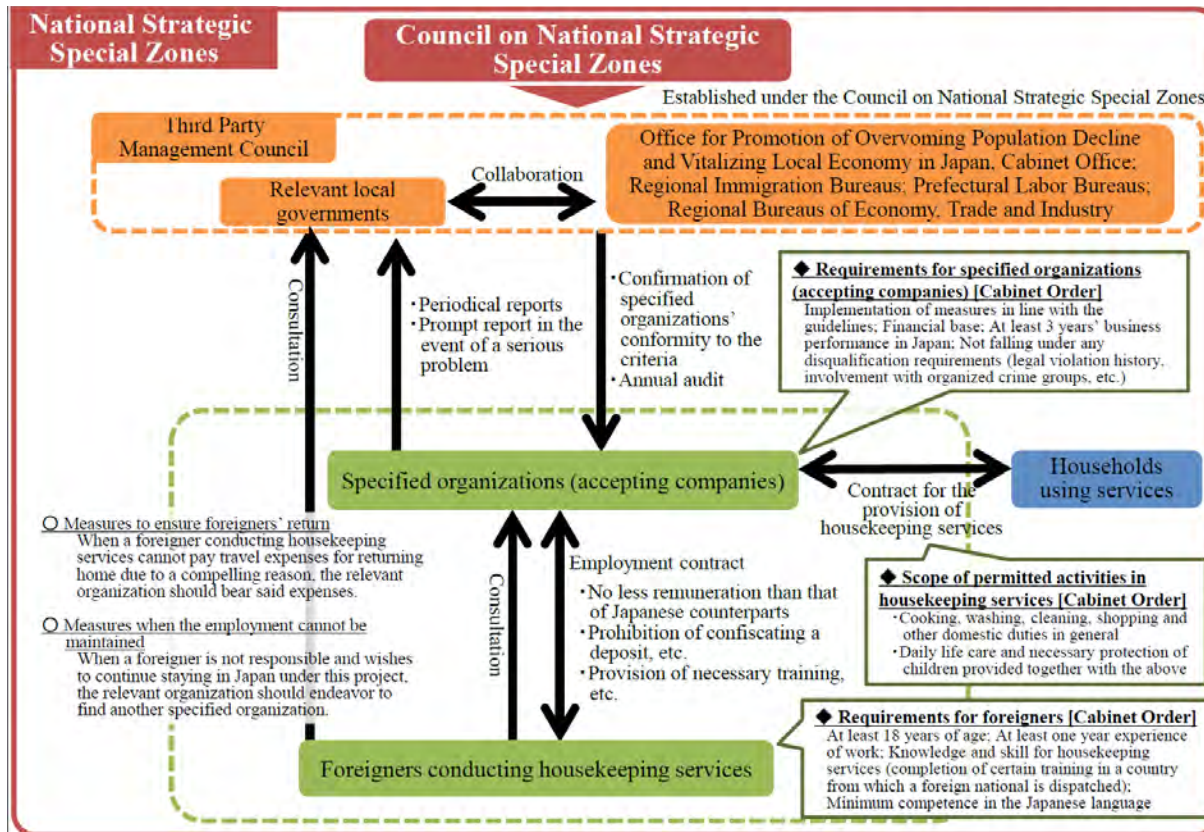
Labor Force Participation Rate of Male Elderly (65 or over), 1980-2020



Emigration Trap



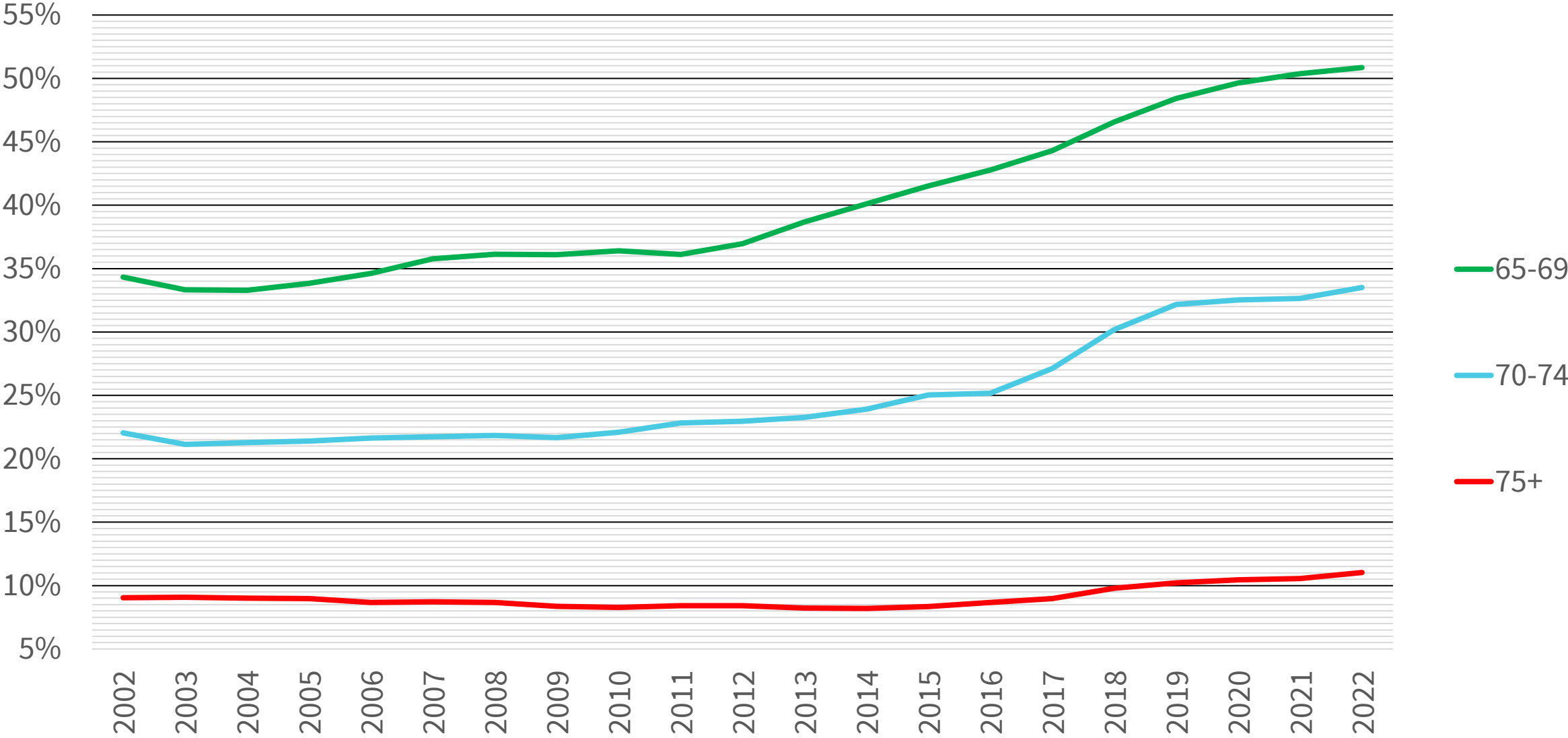
Domestic Workers (2014) and Adapted Point System (2012)



Masuda Report (2014) and Rural Depopulation



Employment Rates for Elderly Age Groups in Japan, 1990-2022



Shinzō Abe as Reluctant Policy Entrepreneur



2018 Immigration Reform: Opening the Front Door



Japan welcomes foreign human resources

Welcome to Japan!

A New Status of Residence
— “Specified Skilled Worker” —
has been created



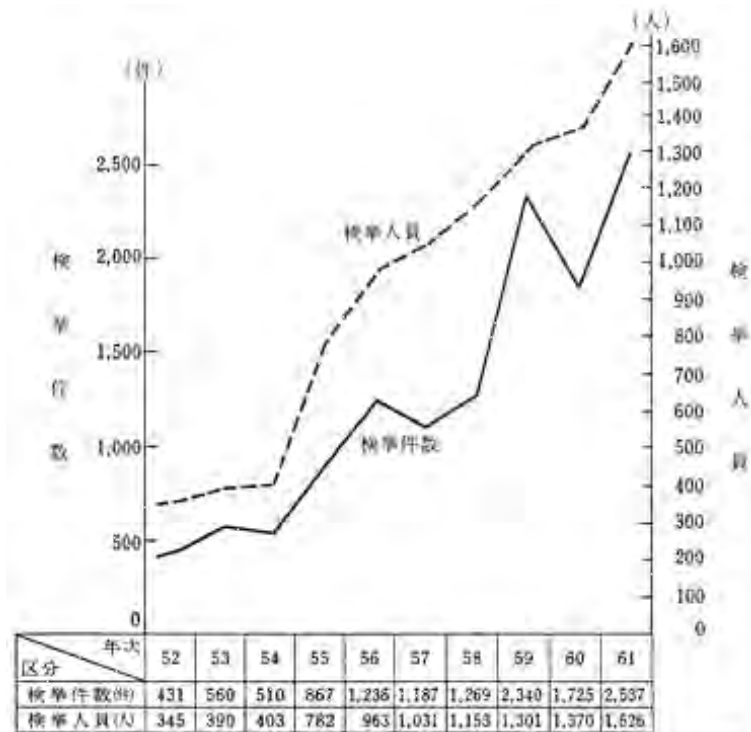
The 14 Industry Fields and Job Categories to Engage in		
Specified Industry Fields	Competent Ministry or Agency of the Industry Fields	Jobs to Engage in
Care Worker	Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare	• Nursing care
Building cleaning Management		• Interior building cleaning
Machine Parts & Tooling Industries	Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry	• Casting • Metal press • Finishing • Welding • Forging • Factory sheet metal work • Machine inspection • Die casting • Electroplating • Painting • Machine maintenance • Machining • Aluminium anodizing
Industrial machinery industry		• Casting • Painting • Finishing • Electrical equipment assembling • Welding • Forging • Iron work • Machine inspection • Printed writing board manufacturing • Industrial packaging • Die casting • Factory sheet metal work • Machine maintenance • Plastic molding • Machining • Plating • Electronic equipment assembling • Metal press
Electric, Electronics and Information Industries	Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism	• Machining • Finishing • Printed writing board manufacturing • Industrial packaging • Metal press • Machine maintenance • Plastic molding • Factory sheet metal work • Electronic equipment assembling • Painting • Plating • Electrical equipment assembling • Welding
Construction Industry		• Formwork construction • Earthwork • Interior finishing/material mounting • Plastering • Roofing • Concrete pumping • Telecommunications • Tunnel and Propulsion • Reinforcement construction • Construction machinery and construction • Reinforcing bar joints
Shipbuilding and Ship Machinery Industry	Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism	• Welding • Finishing • Painting • Machining • Iron work • Electrical equipment assembling
Automobile repair and maintenance		• Automobile everyday inspection and maintenance, Regular inspection and maintenance, Disassembly
Aviation Industry		• Airport ground handling • Aircraft maintenance
Accommodation Industry	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries	• Providing accommodation services such as working at the front desk, planning/public relations, hospitality, restaurant services
Agriculture		• General crop farming • General livestock farming
Fishery & Aquaculture		• Fishery • Aquaculture industry
Manufacture of food and beverages		• General food and beverage manufacturing
Food service industry		• General restaurant industry



Public Security and Order

Police White Book 1987

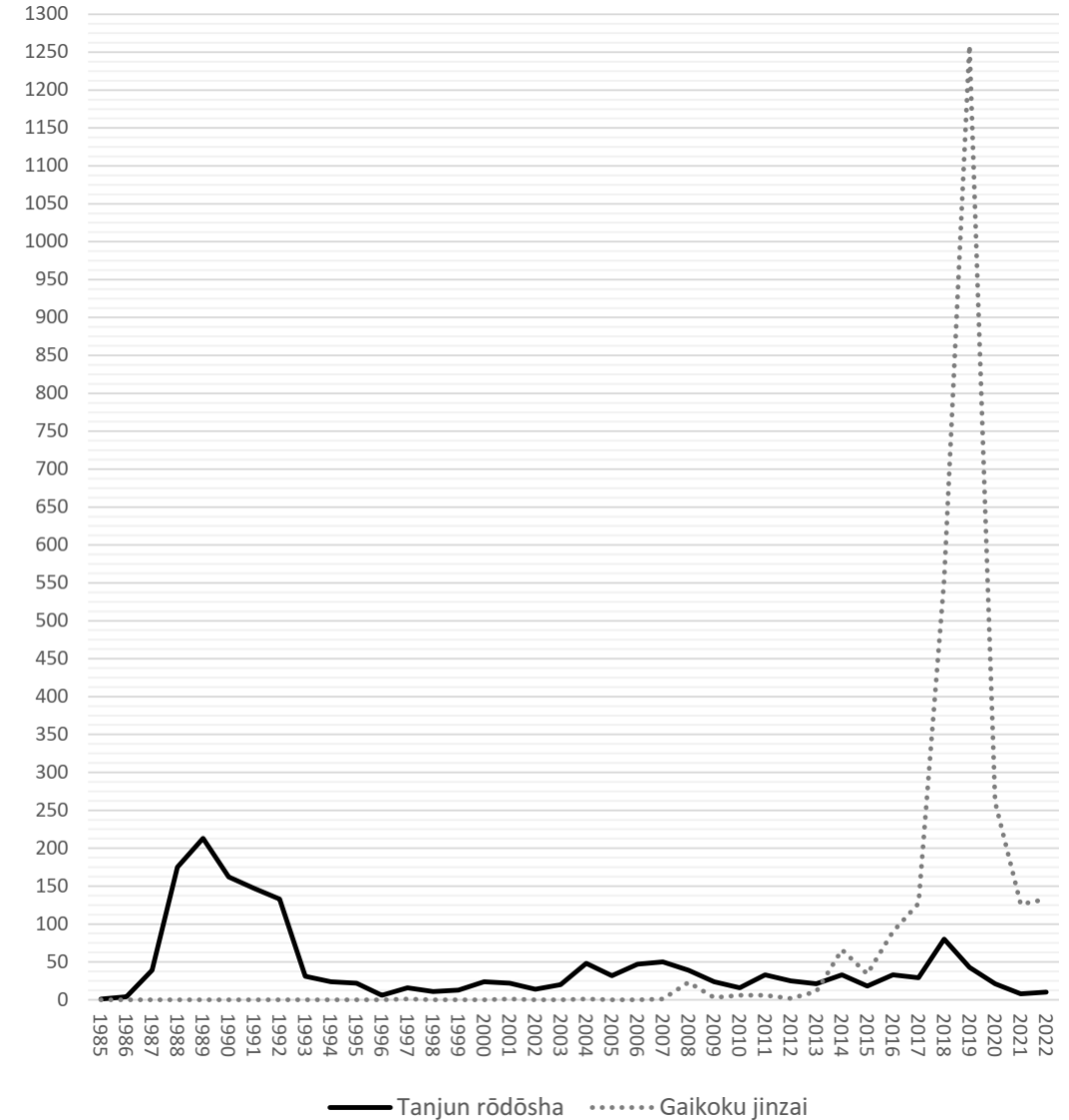
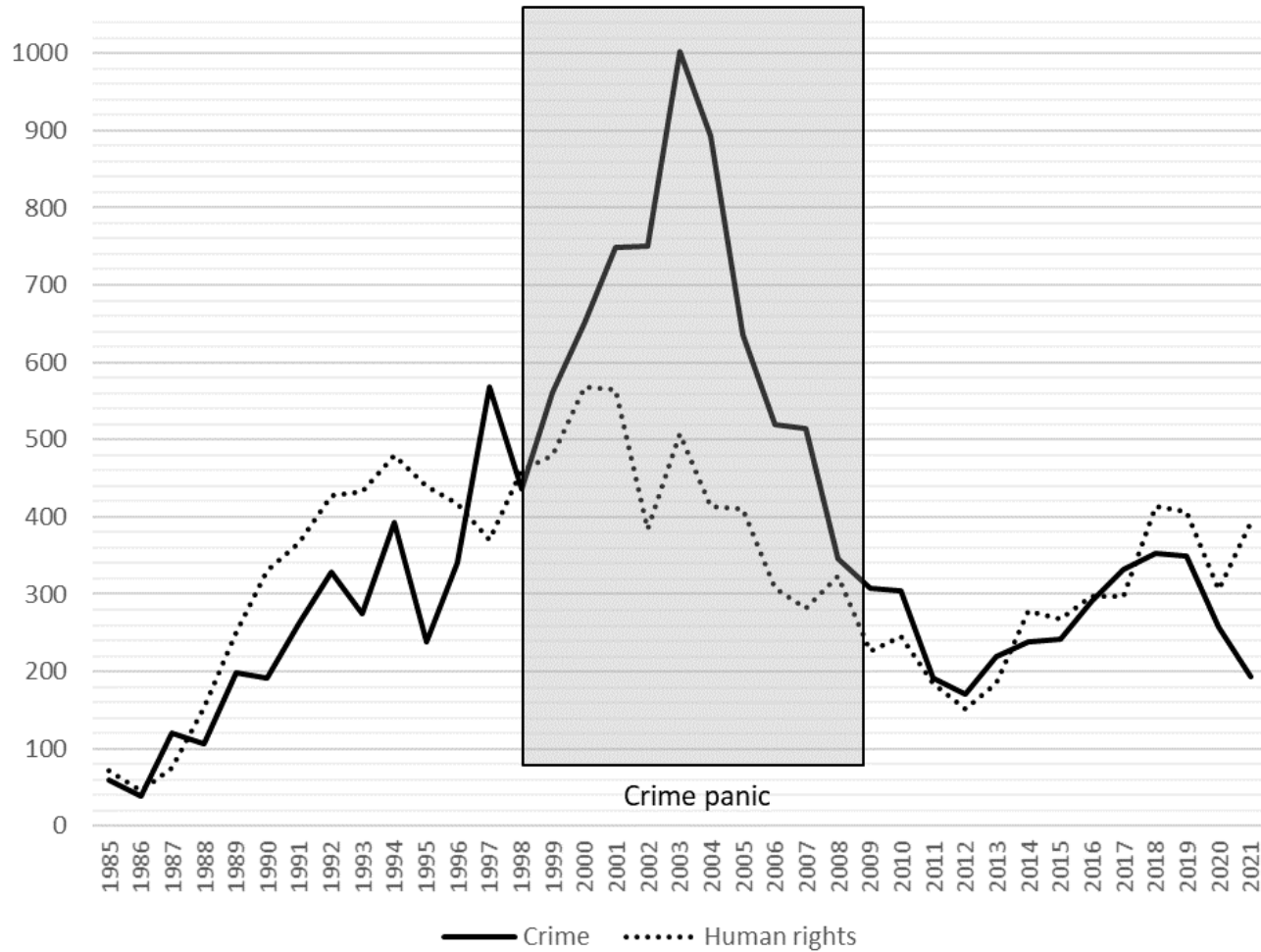
国際化の進展に 対応する警察活動



注) 52年及び53年の数字は、中国人、韓国・朝鮮人及び在日米軍関係者以外の外国人に係るものである。



Changing Framing of Immigration



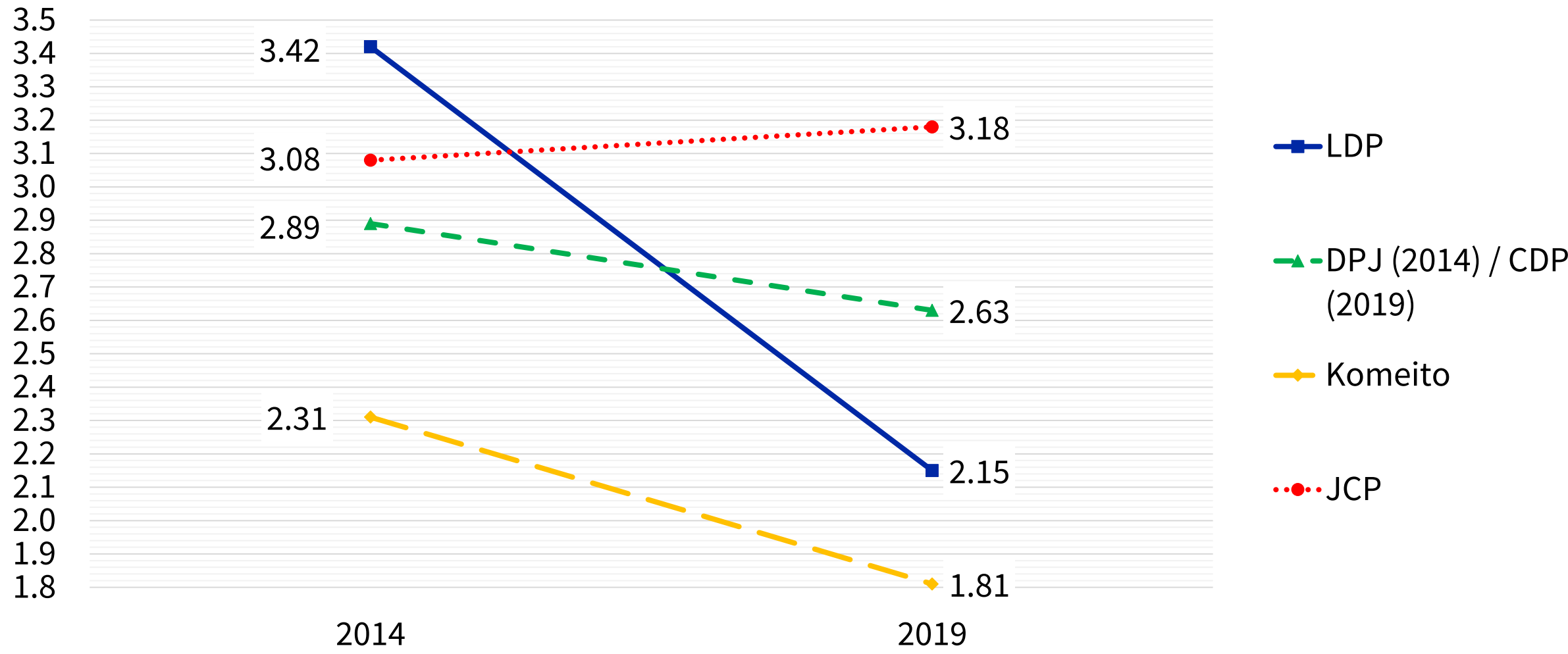
Calderon Case, Late-2000s



Recorded Irregular Immigrants, 1988-2023



Politicians' Support of Accepting foreign workers, 2014 and 2019



一部外国人による犯罪の取り締まり強化を求める意見書

現在、川口市には40,000人を超える外国籍の住民がおり、加えて、住民票をもたない外国人の中には仮放免中の方も相当数いるものと推定されている。多くの外国人は善良に暮らしているものの、一部の外国人は生活圏内である資材置場周辺や住宅密集地域などで暴走行為、煽り運転を繰り返し、人身、物損事故を多く発生させ、被害者が保険で対応するという声がある。すでに死亡事故も起こしており、看過できない状況が続いているが、事態が改善しないのは、警察官不足により、適切な対応ができていないものと考えている。

また、新聞報道にある窃盗、傷害などの犯罪も見逃すことはできない。

現在、地域住民の生活は恐怖のレベルに達しており、警察力の強化は地域の治安維持のためにも緊急かつ必要不可欠となっている。このような一部外国人の行為は、その他多くの善良な外国人に対しても差別と偏見を助長することとなっており、到底見過ごすことはできない。

このことから、この度、地域の窮状を伝え緊急的に解決を図るため、以下要望する。

記

- 1 警察官を増員し、一部外国人の犯罪の取り締まりを強化すること
 - 2 資材置場周辺のパトロールを強化すること
 - 3 暴走行為等の交通違反の取り締まりを強化すること
- 以上、地方自治法第99条の規定にもとづき、意見書を提出する。

令和5年6月29日

川口市議会議員



Issue of Kurdish Minority



Latest Nippon Keidanren Immigration Policy Proposal (December 2025)

‘The Future of Immigration Policy at a Turning Point’: Towards the Development of an Environment for Orderly and Strategic Attraction and Reception

The number of foreign residents in Japan stood at approximately 3.96 million (as of the end of June 2025), whilst the number of foreign workers was approximately 2.3 million (as of the end of October 2024), with both figures reaching record highs. Foreign nationals have already become integral members of Japan’s economic and social fabric, and the pace of growth in the foreign resident population is accelerating further.

Against this backdrop, countries around the world are strengthening their industrial competitiveness, particularly in growth sectors, and the international competition for talent is intensifying further.

On the other hand, there is a sense of unease and unfairness among the public regarding illegal acts and breaches of rules by some foreign nationals, and social interest in immigration policy is growing. In the House of Councillors election held in the summer of 2025, foreigner policy was raised as one of the key issues, though some of the debate was not based on facts. Going forward, the challenge lies in demonstrating the need for the orderly acceptance of capable foreign nationals whilst ensuring that this does not lead to social division; this requires evidence-based improvements to the system and the promotion of medium- to long-term social integration. Japan’s foreigner policy is thus facing a major turning point.

Keidanren
Policy & Action

「転換期における外国人政策のあり方」
～秩序ある戦略的誘致・受入れ環境整備に向けて～

2025年12月16日

代表団長 日本経済団体連合会